

**THE ROLE OF ACTION RESEARCH
IN THE SELF-DEVELOPMENT OF AN ELT TEACHER:
A DESCRIPTIVE CASE STUDY**

A THESIS PRESENTED BY

AYLIN ATIKLER

TO

**THE INSTITUTE OF ECONOMICS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

**BILKENT UNIVERSITY
AUGUST, 1997**

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ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: The Role of Action Research in the
Self-development of an ELT Teacher:
A Descriptive Case Study.

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Teacher training and teacher development are two research issues which have been frequently addressed in recent years in teaching English as a foreign language. Due to a wide range of existing interpretations, many distinctions made between teacher training and teacher development have been articulated by a number of researchers (Larsen-Freeman, 1983; O'Brien, 1986; Duff, 1988; Freeman, 1989; Richards & Nunan, 1990; Wallace, 1991; Ur, 1996).

In this study, Freeman's (1989) teacher training constituents, *knowledge* and *skills*, and one development constituent, *awareness*, were taken as the main constructs. In this way, teacher training and development constituents were integrated and covered under the term, *self-development*. The self-development of an ELT teacher, in a broad sense, refers to the change that is expected to come about as a result of commitment to improve one's own teaching practice.

This study employed action research, one form of classroom-based research, as a means for enhancing the self-development of an ELT teacher in his/her teaching situation. The purpose of the study was to investigate whether an

action research project can contribute to the self-development of an ELT teacher in accumulating *knowledge* of teaching situation, developing teaching *skills* and enhancing *awareness* of personal and professional aspects of teaching.

This descriptive case study was conducted at the Department of Basic English (DBE), Middle East Technical University (METU). The subject of the study was an English instructor, working at the department. Weekly meetings were held by the researcher (Action Research Initiator: ARI) and the subject (Teacher as Action Researcher: TAR) to implement the stages of action research defined as planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). The researcher acted as an initiator of the project and worked collaboratively with the subject for three months.

Qualitative data were collected through action research meetings, the subject's journal entries and interviews conducted by the researcher both during the course of the action research project and at the end. Qualitative data were analyzed by a coding system which entailed the grouping of data into meaningful categories in the light of the research questions. Some secondary quantitative data were also collected and analyzed through descriptive and interpretive statistical procedures.

The findings of the study indicate that the subject experienced self-development in terms of knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice. One example of self-development in terms of knowledge can be cited as the subject's accumulating knowledge concerning writing techniques, following the identification of the problem as poor organization in student essays. In addition, the findings reveal that the subject gained familiarity with the process of action

research. Self-development in acquiring teaching skills was reported to be in developing the ability for helping her students with the organization of their essays by employing various pre-writing activities such as mind-mapping and role-playing. The findings reveal that the subject experienced the most benefit in terms of awareness, realizing both her students' and her own weak and strong points in the teaching/learning experience. In addition, drawing on the findings of the study, it can be said that she developed a positive attitude towards action research due to the problem solving approach that the project offered.

In conclusion, this descriptive case study showed that action research can contribute to the self-development of an ELT teacher in terms of accumulating knowledge of language teaching, developing teaching skills and enhancing awareness of personal and professional aspects of teaching situations.

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MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM
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The examining committee appointed by the Institute of Economics and Social
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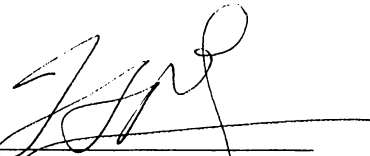
has read the thesis of the student.

The committee has decided that the thesis of the student is satisfactory.

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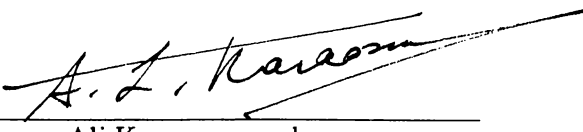
We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our combined opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts.


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And finally, my special thanks go to my family and friends for their love, patience and understanding.

The heart wants what it wants,

Or else it does not care...

E. Dickinson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background of the Study.....	4
Statement of the Problem.....	5
Purpose of the Study.....	6
Research Questions.....	6
Significance of the Study.....	7
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
Introduction.....	9
Teacher Training and Teacher Development.....	9
Knowledge, Skills and Awareness.....	14
Change and Self-development of Teachers.....	16
Action Research.....	18
Historical Background of Action Research.....	18
Definitions of Action Research.....	19
Characteristics of Action Research.....	20
Examples of Action Research.....	26
Conclusion.....	28
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY.....	30
Introduction.....	30
The Subject, Teacher as Action Researcher (TAR).....	32
Data Collection Techniques.....	32
Action Research Meetings.....	33
TAR's Journal.....	33
Interviews.....	34
Pre- and Post-action Interviews.....	34
Final Interview.....	35
Data Analysis.....	36
CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS.....	37
Overview of the Study.....	37
Qualitative Data Analysis.....	38
Summary of Action Research Meetings.....	40
Journal Analysis.....	46
Interview Analysis.....	56
Analysis of Pre- and Post-action Interviews.....	56
Analysis of Final Interview.....	59

	Quantitative Data Analysis.....	62
	Comparison of Two Sets of Students' Essays.....	62
	Questionnaire (Lickert-scale).....	63
	Conclusion.....	67
CHAPTER 5	CONCLUSION.....	68
	Overview of the Study.....	68
	General Results.....	69
	Discussion.....	75
	Limitations.....	77
	Implications for Further Research.....	78
	Institutional Implications.....	79
REFERENCES		80
APPENDICES		85
	Appendix A:	
	A Sample Transcript of an Action Research Meeting..	85
	Appendix B:	
	TAR's Journal Entries.....	94
	Appendix C:	
	Interview Questions.....	113
	Appendix D:	
	Transcript of Interviews.....	116
	Appendix E:	
	Questionnaire.....	131
	Appendix F:	
	A 5-scale Criteria for Scoring Argumentative Essays..	132
	Appendix G:	
	A Sample Coded Page from TAR's Journal	133

LIST OF TABLES

<u>TABLE</u>		<u>PAGE</u>
1	Advantages and Drawbacks of Teacher Training and Teacher Development	12
2	Summary of Action Research (AR) Meetings.....	41
3	Code Categories and their Acronyms for the Analysis of TAR's Journal Entries.....	46
4	Main Code Category 1 (Action Research Attitude).....	48
5	Main Code Category 2 (Knowledge).....	49
6	Main Code Category 3 (Skill).....	50
7	Main Code Category 4 (Awareness).....	52
8	Code Categories and their Acronyms for the Analysis of Pre- and Post-action Interviews.....	57
9	Analysis of Pre- and Post-action Interviews.....	58
10	Code Categories and Their Acronyms for the Analysis of the Final Interview.....	60
11	Analysis of the Final Interview.....	61
12	T-test Result of Two Sets of Students' Essays.....	63
13	Questionnaire Results.....	65
14	The Analysis of the Open-ended Responses.....	66

LIST OF FIGURES

<u>FIGURES</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
1 Action Research Spiral	23

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

One can argue that teachers, as professionals, need to constantly re-examine and improve their teaching practice. A traditional and common mode of development that English language teachers engage in is said to occur by trial-and-error over the years. As a result of this, teachers develop their own teaching styles. Meanwhile, there may be a risk of experiencing a sense of dissatisfaction with the routine demands of teaching such as teaching the same book and using the same techniques year after year. It is argued that in such cases, teachers may have difficulty in “moving beyond the level of automatic or routinized responses to classroom situations” (Richards, 1991, p. 4).

Many teachers become aware of a need for development through the analysis of their own teaching practice. It has been suggested that when such a need occurs, the process of development is initiated, leading to a process of change in teachers’ professional practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

Over the last twenty years, concepts such as teacher training and teacher development have been proposed and discussed in order to enhance teachers’ professional development. In general terms, training is seen as “something that can be presented or managed by others and development is viewed as “something that can be done only by and for oneself” within a specified period of time (Wallace, 1991, p. 3). The basic constituents of training and development are that teacher training is based on mastering *knowledge* and *skills* and teacher development is based on raising *awareness* through the involvement of the individual teacher (Freeman, 1989).

It can be stated that both teacher training and development as discussed in teaching literature can foster a teacher's improvement in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). Such an improvement will be addressed as *self-development* in this study. In using the term, self-development, the intent here is to suggest that self-development includes change in teaching behavior due to the accumulation of *knowledge*, development of necessary *skills*, and enhanced *awareness* through continuous critical reflection on actual classroom experience. In this way, the constituents of training, which are knowledge and skills, will be integrated with that of development, which is awareness.

Knowledge development can help the teacher to develop a background of important and relevant theoretical concepts and become conversant with new methods and techniques in ELT (Finocchiaro, 1988). Furthermore, *skill* development can enable the actual translation of ideas to practice. Finally, enhanced *awareness* can be viewed as considering the benefits and drawbacks of what has been done or will have been done and making sound decisions. One would expect these would bring about change in teaching practice, which is a tangible sign of self-development.

One means of enabling self-development of an ELT teacher can be through action research because of the nature of its inquiry. It is said that action research is "a self-reflective inquiry initiated by teachers for the purpose of improving their classroom practices" (Gebhard, 1992; cited in Kral, p. 38). The concept of action research was first developed in the 1940s as a strategy for change by Lewin whose aim was to derive general laws of group life from observation and reflection on the processes of a social change in a community (Nixon, 1990). In primary,

secondary and higher education, action research has been widely used as it aims at “the development of practice, the development of the understanding of the practice by its practitioners and the development of the situation in which the practice takes place” (Zuber-Skeritt, 1992, p.15).

It can be claimed that action research may lead to self-development of an ELT teacher. First, the action research process can help teachers develop a professional problem-solving attitude because during the process, teachers can diagnose problems, search for solutions, take action in the classroom and monitor whether and how well the action worked. Moreover, the cycle can repeat itself many times, focusing on the same problem or another (Calhoun, 1993), thus enabling the teacher to accumulate knowledge, acquire skills and enhance awareness of teaching through continuous reflection on what has been done in the language classroom. It can then be argued that even trained teachers of English can benefit from action research because action research can revitalize a trained teacher’s knowledge, skills and awareness by its very nature, which requires ongoing development involving continuous reappraisal and reevaluation.

To conclude, action research which consists of a spiral of cycles of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) can be used as a tool for self-development of an ELT teacher. This may result in change by providing the experience of improving knowledge, developing skills and enhancing awareness of teaching practice.

Background of the Study

This study is a descriptive case study. Case studies examine a specific phenomenon such as a person, a program or an institution by describing it. (Merriam, 1990). In this study, the self-development of an ELT teacher was examined by conducting an action research project at the Department of Basic English (DBE), the Middle East Technical University (METU).

At DBE, METU, there are approximately 200 ELT teachers, 8 of whom are working in the administration and 3 of whom are working as teacher trainers at the Teacher Education Unit. This unit runs pre-service and in-service courses for newly hired teachers every year and arranges weekly teacher development seminars for the whole staff throughout the year. In addition, the unit runs a two-year teacher training program called the Royal Society of Arts (RSA) Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English (DOTE). This program is offered to both teachers of DBE, METU and those of other institutions.

The researcher was previously involved in a research project conducted between 1991-1993 at DBE, METU. This project was a collaborative action research project carried out with the guidance of a teacher trainer working in the Teacher Education Unit. The four teachers involved in the project reported that doing background reading during the project enabled them to develop in terms of knowledge. They also stated that they developed reflective thinking skills. The findings of the study indicate that the use of action research can lead to consciousness raising which “can enable teachers to be more confident of themselves” in establishing the knowledge beneficial for them. (Gül-Peker, 1997, p. 235). The current study also argues that action research can be used as a tool

for self-development of ELT teachers in *knowledge*, *skills* and *awareness* in the context of DBE, METU.

This study borrows the terms, knowledge, skills and awareness as used by Freeman (1989) from a study conducted by Özgirin (1996). This study investigated the effectiveness of a training course at a university in Turkey and the extent to which the training course promoted changes in trainees' levels of knowledge, skills, attitude, awareness and performance. One of the findings of the study was that action research projects, a component of the training course, helped the trainees "quite a lot" in improving their *knowledge*, *skills*, attitude and performance, and helped "a lot" in improving *awareness* of teaching practice (p. 65).

Statement of the Problem

Anecdotal evidence suggests that at DBE, METU, the instructors, teacher trainers and administrators share, in principle, the view that teachers should go through a continuous process of change that is expected to bring about self-development. While acknowledging the need for change and development in the department, several of the teachers, including trained ones, who regularly attend the in-service sessions, have stated that the sessions they attend may be irrelevant to what they personally most need in their own classrooms. Furthermore, they have pointed out that they may need development in one particular area, for example in reading comprehension one semester, but then something completely different say, academic writing the next semester.

Given the possible differing needs of teachers, one can argue that action research is an appropriate means for promoting self-development. This seems to be so since the ongoing nature of action research can enable teachers to delve into any skill or topic area that they may wish to work on and provide them with guidelines as to how to identify problems and seek solutions for them in their own classroom situations. It seems likely then, that the practical and applicable nature of action research, as conducted in classroom settings, can be expected to meet the individual needs of teachers at the DBE, METU.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are:

1. To familiarize ELT teachers with the possibility of using action research in their own classrooms
2. To discover whether through action research, an ELT teacher may accumulate knowledge, develop teaching skills and raise awareness of new teaching perspectives through continuous reflection on actual classroom experience
3. To explore whether a chain of development with interested colleagues can be initiated at the DBE, METU.

Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions will be addressed:

1. Can an action research project be implemented within the DBE/METU work environment?

2. What attitude does an ELT teacher who participated in an action research project have towards action research?
3. Can an action research project enhance the self-development of an ELT teacher in accumulating knowledge of language teaching/learning?
4. Can an action research project enhance the self-development of an ELT teacher in developing teaching skills?
 - a. Can participation in an action research project encourage an ELT teacher to observe more closely his/her students' learning and attitude changes than previously?
5. Can an action research project contribute to the self-development of an ELT teacher in enhancing awareness of personal and professional aspects of teaching/learning situations?
6. Can participation in an action research project encourage an ELT teacher to initiate new action research projects in the future thus initiating a chain of development?

Significance of the Study

This study can contribute to the notion that research and practice need not be thought of as separate entities. In other words, this kind of research highlights the view that research can be conducted by practitioners i.e. classroom teachers, rather than outside researchers (Nunan, 1989). Therefore, it is hoped that the experience derived from this study will provide a model for teachers who are interested in conducting action research in their classrooms.

In addition, the study can provide evidence about whether other teachers in the institution can be encouraged to carry out action research projects which will enable them to experience self-development as a result of change in their knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice. One can expect the experience gained in an action research project to be extended by “*a chain of development*” throughout the DBE. This means that the teacher who has experienced the process of action research and its positive outcome may wish to initiate a new action research project with an interested colleague at DBE, METU; hence, starting a chain of development. In this way, the number of action research projects being conducted in classrooms may increase and the notion and experience of self-development may spread throughout the DBE in the future.

Finally, this study can also help other English teaching institutions in Turkey to adopt the model proposed in the study and thus, encourage other teachers in such situations to develop their own action research projects.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

What contributions can action research make to the self-development of an ELT teacher? This question can be answered in a context where teacher training and teacher development constituents are integrated to bring about self-development in accumulating knowledge of language teaching/learning, improving teaching skills and enhancing awareness of teaching practice. *Knowledge* and *skills* have been considered to be essential constituents in teacher training, and *awareness* raising as one important part of teacher development (Freeman, 1989; Woodward, 1991). This study attempts to create a context where both training and development constituents are integrated and investigates whether conducting action research can enhance an ELT teacher's self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice.

In the first section of the chapter, the literature on teacher training and teacher development will be reviewed and in the second part, a brief introduction to change in teaching practice will be presented to establish a framework for the study. In the third part, the historical background, definition, characteristics and various examples of action research studies will be presented.

Teacher Training and Teacher Development

In the last twenty years, there have been various attempts to improve English language teachers' teaching practice and deepen their understanding of teaching principles. Teacher training and teacher development are the most

common mediums through which attempts to better the teaching situation have been made. However, these two terms have been used interchangeably and interpreted differently resulting in confusions and misconceptions. In order to clarify how teacher training and development can be interpreted, it is necessary to compare the views of several authors.

Wallace (1991) suggests “the distinction is that training is something that can be presented or managed by others; whereas development is something that can be done only by and for oneself” (p.3). In addition, Ur (1996) states that training focuses on professional skills while development focuses on personal growth. Similarly, teacher development is viewed as a “process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitudinal growth of teachers” (Lange, 1990, p. 250).

Teacher training can be seen as insufficient when wider issues of teacher development are considered. Duff (1988) believes that training can be considered “as a limited -and possibly limiting- word that runs the risk of techniques and procedures that may be no more than a bag of tricks” (p.111). Teacher development, however, involves much broader issues as mentioned in O’Brien’s (1986) definition of teacher development (cited in Matthews, 1992):

A life-long, autonomous process of learning and growth, by which as teachers we adapt to changes in and around us and enhance our awareness, knowledge and skills in personal, interpersonal and professional aspects of our lives (p. 9).

Similarly, Larsen-Freeman (1983) believes that educating teachers should go beyond training for a specific situation; thus taking a holistic approach. The

notion of training, as restricted to skill training, has been modified by Wallace (1991) who proposes the *reflective model*. This model incorporates two dimensions of educating teachers: “received knowledge” which involves the scientific element of research and “experiential knowledge” which refers to the ongoing experience of teachers as professionals. In this model, the training of a teacher is not limited to specific knowledge and skills during a certain period but is extended to include life-long professional experience.

Another two dimensional approach to educating teachers has been developed by Richards and Nunan (1990). They propose two different kinds of approaches: the “*micro approach* to the study of teaching which analytically looks at teaching in terms of directly observable characteristics and *macro approach* which makes holistic generalizations and inferences that go beyond directly observable classroom behavior” (p. 4). The former approach considers the training needs of teachers as discrete and trainable skills while the latter addresses teacher development as educating the teacher regarding the concepts and thinking processes that make teachers aware of teaching principles.

Ur (1996) summarizes the advantages and drawbacks of teacher training and teacher development in Table 1.

Table 1

Advantages and Drawbacks of Teacher Training and Teacher Development

Advantages of Teacher Training	Advantages of Teacher Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses valuable external sources of knowledge • Courses based on organized syllabus-coverage • Monitoring of standards • Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning based on teacher's own experience and reflection • Critical, thoughtful learning • Respects teacher as autonomous professional • Facilitators are themselves teachers
Drawbacks of Teacher Training	Drawbacks of Teacher Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough emphasis on teacher's own thinking and experience • Teacher not seen as an autonomous professional but subordinate to 'experts' • Trainers often not teachers themselves, out of touch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough use made of external input (knowledge, skills) • Lack of organization, may be insufficient • No control of standards or accreditation.

Ur (1996) argues that teacher training provides teachers with sources of knowledge to be accumulated; however, the teacher's own thinking and experience is not sufficiently emphasized. The main advantage of teacher development is that learning is based on the teacher's own experience and reflection; however, external input such as knowledge and skills are not adequately provided.

A clear distinction between teacher training and development has been provided by Freeman (1989). He suggests that teacher training and teacher

development are “two principle strategies for educating language teachers” (p.37) and that both aim at generating change in what and how to teach. These two strategies, however, are said to be different in the means by which they achieve that aim.

One aspect of difference is the criteria for assessing change in the teaching behavior. That is to say, in teacher training, “the change is external and easily accessible to the collaborator who works as a teacher educator, trainer or a supervisor” (Freeman, 1989, p. 42). On the other hand, in teacher development, the change occurs internally, making it difficult for the collaborator to observe. Another aspect that differs is that teacher training takes place within a specific period of time whereas in teacher development, work may go on until the teacher and the collaborator decide to stop; therefore, teacher development has an open-ended nature.

One last difference, according to Freeman (1989), is in terms of the constituent base. He asserts that teacher training deals with discrete *skills* or *knowledge* which can be mastered. Teacher development, on the other hand, focuses on complex aspects of teaching that make teachers develop “an internal monitoring system” (p. 40). In other words, teacher training is based on mastering *knowledge* and *skills* through specific courses of action whereas teacher development is based on raising *awareness* through the involvement of the individual teacher.

Yet, another way of defining training and development is presented by Woodward (1991) who argues that training is short term and competency-based whereas development is long term and holistic. She also shares Freeman’s view

in that teacher training is *knowledge* and *skill* based; however, teacher development focuses on one's personal growth and the development of insights and is based on *awareness*. These views are supported by other educators (Zimpher & Howey, 1990) who acknowledge, in general terms, that development of teachers requires special attention to changes that take place separately in teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions.

All these definitions and ideas show that teacher training and development as separate activities are not sufficient guides to effective teaching. Gül-Peker (1996) raises this argument stating that "teacher development entails the wider aspects of teaching and teacher training" and suggests that teacher training and development should be integrated. She supports this view with the findings of her study (1997) citing evidence of how teachers expressed the need for what both training and development offer in the workshops conducted during the course of the collaborative action research project noted in Chapter 1.

In the light of all the constituents mentioned in the literature on teacher training and teacher development, this study takes *knowledge*, *skills* and *awareness* as the main constructs, thus integrating the constituents of teacher training and development.

Knowledge, Skills and Awareness

The identification of these three terms, knowledge, skills and awareness was originally provided by the Masters of Arts in Teaching (MAT) Program at the School for International Training (cited in Freeman, 1989). This study

makes use of the definitions of these three constructs as defined by Freeman (1989) as follows:

Knowledge, for the teacher, includes what is being taught (subject matter); to whom it is being taught (the students-their backgrounds, learning styles, language levels and so on)...*Skills* define what the teacher has to be able to do: present material, give clear instructions, manage classroom instructions and so on. *Awareness* is the capacity to recognize and monitor the attention one is giving or has given to something (pp. 31, 33).

Concerning knowledge and skills, Finocchiaro (1988) points out that there are said to be numerous kinds of knowledge for teachers to acquire and hundreds of skills for them to master (Finocchiaro, 1988; Freeman, 1989). To illustrate, in terms of knowledge, teachers should develop a background of the significant and relevant theoretical concepts not only from the field of ELT but also from other fields such as linguistics and education. Besides, teachers should become knowledgeable about new methods and techniques so as to make reasonable decisions when teaching. In terms of skills, teachers should learn how to utilize and develop simple teaching materials such as charts and realia in order to facilitate learning and to add interest and variety to their lessons. Moreover, teachers should keep the motivation of students at a high level by engaging their lives and interests and should know how to evaluate student achievement and proficiency to make learners aware of their progress. Teachers' improvement in knowledge and skills, thus entails the "what" and the "how" of teaching.

As for the third construct of this research, which is awareness, it can be claimed that awareness is of utmost significance since it functions as the trigger essential for self-development. Freeman (1989) believes that awareness has a unifying role and a more holistic function because “awareness provides the dynamics that scan the field to be known and is, therefore, both a condition and a means” (Gattegno; cited in Freeman, 1989, p. 33). In order for teachers to experience development, they should become aware of their current practices in terms of their strengths and weaknesses (Larsen-Freeman; cited in Bailey, 1992; Finocchiaro, 1988). Teaching is not only a process of accumulating knowledge and skills but also a continuing process of enhancing awareness of personal and professional aspects of the teaching situation.

Change and Self -Development of Teachers

When teaching becomes subject to routinization, it is probably time for either the institution or the teacher to take action with the purpose of promoting change in the teaching situation. As Fullan and Hargreaves suggest (1992, p. 1) “successful change involves learning how to do something new.” In this study, the type of learning by the teacher which promotes change is referred to as *self-development*.

Self-development, in a broad sense, refers to the change that results from commitment to improve one’s teaching practice. Here, it should be emphasized that during the process of change, there are no “quick fixes” (Lewin, 1991, p.281) to the problems that might emerge. In other words, change may not be

immediate or complete. In fact, a change may happen over time and might not be directly accessible to an observer.

By definition, change should necessarily involve self-development of a teacher. One can change external behaviors with no understanding of commitment to these behaviors. However, even such surface changes may lead to self-development over time. It has been suggested that “change in practice frequently preceded change in beliefs and understanding.” (Huberman & Miles, cited in Fullan & Hargreaves, p. 2). These beliefs and understanding would be the outcome of one’s own awareness of teaching practice which leads to a change in the frame of mind. Therefore, it can be suggested that change and self-development are closely related to each other. Zimpher and Howey (1990) assert:

Our interest in teacher learning requires that we pay attention to changes that occur separately in teacher’s knowledge, skills and dispositions as well as changes in how they bring these ingredients together in their teaching (p. 169).

Zimpher and Howley’s statement indicates that in a generic sense, changes in a teacher’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions, i.e. frame of mind, shape one’s teaching. In other words, self-development may occur when there is a change in a teacher’s knowledge, skills and frame of mind through enhancement of awareness.

In the light of all these views on teacher training, teacher development, change and *self-development*, this study integrates training and development

constituents within a specific framework to investigate the self-development of teachers through change in knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice.

It is now appropriate to discuss a possible means to achieve self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness. The third part of this chapter presents a brief literature review on action research, which is proposed as a means of achieving self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness.

Action Research

One way of encouraging teachers to improve their teaching practice may be to have them adopt an action research approach to their classroom teaching. Participation in action research has been suggested as a “popular means of” providing teachers’ professional and personal development. (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992, p. 200). Action research can foster commitment to small-scale change, that is to say, self-development in the teaching practice of an individual teacher. In short, action research may create a setting where an ELT teacher can experience personal and professional development.

Historical Background of Action Research

The concept of action research was first developed in the 1940s as a strategy of change by Lewin whose aim was “to derive general laws of group life from careful observation and reflection on the processes of social change in a community” (Nixon, 1990). It was Corey (1949a, 1949b; cited in Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) at the Teachers College of Columbia University, who first recognized action research as a valuable means of teacher research and

introduced it to the educational community in 1949. Corey (1953) defined action research as the process through which practitioners study their own practice to solve their personal practical teaching problems.

Action research was further developed by Elliott in the 1970s (cited in Nixon, 1990) who established the Classroom Action Research Network seeking to form a research community that focused on concerns of practicing teachers. According to Elliott, action research is “essentially a self-evaluative process of systematic inquiry by teachers into their own classroom practice” (p.642). He views action research as a means of helping teachers become learners in their classrooms.

Definitions of Action Research

A definition of educational action research was devised by participants in a National Invitation Seminar on Action Research held at Deakin University, Victoria, Australia in 1981. Carr and Kemmis (1986), who chaired the seminar, noted the following definition of action research:

Educational action research is a term used to describe a family of activities in curriculum development, professional development, school improvement programs, and systems planning and policy development. These activities have in common the identification of strategies of planned action which are *implemented* and then systematically submitted to *observation, reflection* and *change*. Participants in the action being considered are integrally involved in all of these activities (pp. 164-165).

Carr and Kemmis (1985, cited in Nunan, 1993) define action research as follows: “action research is a form of self-reflective inquiry carried out by

practitioners, aimed at solving problems, improving practice or enhancing understanding” (p. 229). Richards and Lockhart (1994) use action research to refer to teacher-initiated classroom investigation which seeks to increase the teacher’s understanding of classroom teaching and learning and leads to change in classroom practices. Hopkins (1985, cited in Woodward, p. 224) considers action research as a kind of research “in which teachers look critically at their own classrooms primarily for the purpose of improving their teaching and the quality of life in their own classrooms”.

Another definition in a more generic sense is provided by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). They state that:

Action research is a form of collective self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own social or educational practices as well as their understandings of these practices and the situations in which these practices are carried out (p. 5).

As these definitions imply, action research can be viewed as a form of teacher research carried out in classrooms and aims at development of one’s teaching as well as understanding of the teaching situation. In other words, it can be argued that action research can bring about an increase in understanding and self-awareness for the teacher in practice.

Characteristics of Action Research

Nunan (1993) sees action research as a form of research which is becoming increasingly significant in language education. Three defining

characteristics of action research as suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988) are that action research is conducted by practitioners i.e. classroom teachers rather than outside researchers; secondly, that it is collaborative; and thirdly, that it aims at changing things. These are the general characteristics of action research. Let us now examine who conducts action research, when it is used and how it is implemented.

Who Conducts Action Research?

Cohen and Manion (1990) suggest that action research can be undertaken by three different parties:

1. a single teacher working on his/her own with his/her class
2. a group of teachers working together within an educational context
3. a teacher or teachers working collaboratively with a researcher or researchers

The first type of action research can be called “individual teacher research” (Calhoun, 1989, p. 63). The teacher researcher focuses on changes in his/her classroom and defines an area or problem of interest such as teaching/learning strategies and classroom management. The teacher then seeks solutions to the problem.

The second and the third type can be called collaborative action research. The teachers involved can focus on problems and changes in a single classroom or in several classrooms. The research team may include as few as two people, or it may include several teachers and administrators or other external participants. The second and the third types are the most prominent in recent years. In fact, it is believed that “action research functions best when it is co-operative action research” (Cohen & Manion, 1990, p. 221). This study adopts

the second approach as a model since the researcher is working collaboratively with a colleague to conduct an action research project.

When is Action Research Used?

It is generally appropriate to conduct action research in regard to a specific problem in a specific situation or when a current system needs to be renewed with a new approach. Cohen and Manion (1990) suggest the following areas as appropriate for action research: teaching methods, teaching/learning strategies, instructional materials, evaluative procedures, classroom management, attitudes and values, personal in-service development of teachers, and administration.

How is Action Research Implemented?

While conducting action research, four main stages are implemented which are plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). Within these stages, there are certain necessary steps to form the action research spiral. Figure 1 shows how action research works:

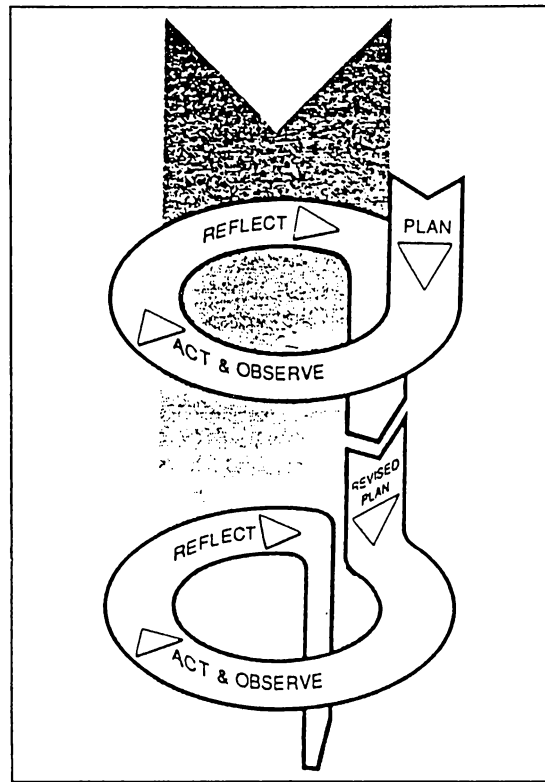


Figure 1 Action Research Spiral

Stages of action research.

These four stages of action research, namely plan, act, observe and reflect are of vital importance for undertaking action research. After initial attention is given to decide what theme to work on, the teacher or teachers should implement the following stages (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988)

1. *Planning Stage*: Develop a plan of critically informed action to improve what is already happening.
2. *Action Stage*: Act to implement the plan
3. *Observation Stage*: Observe the effects of the critically informed action in the context in which it occurs.
4. *Reflection Stage*: Reflect critically on these effects as a basis for further planning, acting and observing through a succession of cycles.

In other words, the teacher or a group of teachers develops a plan of action to better the current teaching situation in his/her classroom, acts in the classroom, observes what has happened within its context, reflects on the results and goes back to the first stage if necessary. It is vital to action research to realize that these stages can repeat many times. The spiral of cycles of action can further be explained as follows (Zuber-Skerrit, 1992):

The plan includes problem analysis and a strategic plan; action refers to the implementation of the strategic plan; observation includes an evaluation of the action by appropriate methods and techniques; and reflection means reflecting the results of the evaluation on the whole action and research process, which may lead to the identification of a new problem or problems and hence a new cycle of planning, acting, observing and reflecting (p. 11).

One might argue that planning, acting, observing and reflecting are normally carried out in everyday professional practice by teachers. However, implementing these stages in action research requires a more systematic way of thinking about what happens in the teaching practice, a careful implementation of the plan where improvements are considered to be possible and an effective method of monitoring and evaluating the plan for continuing future improvement.

Steps of action research.

There are eight steps within these four stages of action research cycle. (Cohen and Manion, 1990). These are (1) Identify the problem, (2) Develop a draft proposal based on discussion and negotiation between interested parties,

i.e., teachers, researchers, and sponsors, (3) Review what has already been written about the issue in question, (4) Restate the problem or formulate hypotheses; discuss the assumptions underlying the project, (5) Select research procedures, resources, materials, methods, (6) Choose evaluation procedures, (7) Collect the data, analyze it and provide feedback, and (8) Interpret the data, draw out inferences and evaluate the project.

Allwright and Bailey (1991) mention a similar procedure in action research which they call “six repeated steps” (p.44). They are (1) identify the problem, (2) seek knowledge, (3) plan an action, (4) implement the action, (5) observe the action, (6) reflect on your observation, and (7) revise the plan.

During the identification of the problem, the current teaching situation is reflected upon, and a problem area to focus on is chosen, considering the needs of the teachers, students or the curriculum. In the second step, relevant background knowledge about the identified problem is sought and examined. Books, articles and experts can be consulted to develop the necessary background in order to solve the problem. In the light of the knowledge gathered at the end of the second step, decisions are made to devise an action plan. After the implementation of the action, the reflection on the observed action takes place and the plan can then be revised for further improvement. In this way, the cycle starts once more.

This process enables teachers who wish to investigate events in their own classrooms to take constructive steps towards solving immediate problems and reflecting systematically on the teaching experience and its outcome. Thus, the

purpose of action research is to achieve understanding of the teaching practice in its context and develop practical solutions to problems.

Limitations of Action Research

The main argument against action research is that it lacks scientific rigor in that its objective is situational and that its findings do not contribute directly to general educational situations (Cohen & Manion, 1990). Another criticism raised against action research is that teachers involved in action research can become isolated from other teachers in their schools and may not, therefore, be able to influence change across the wider organizational and curricular units of their institutions (Nixon, 1990). However, action research can be used to promote change in wider curriculum issues. As it becomes more extensive and used by more schools, it will become more standardized and less personalized (Cohen & Manion, 1990). Besides, there are a number of ways to disseminate the findings of action research such as giving presentations and writing articles for an ELT newsletter or a magazine.

Examples of Action Research

This section provides examples of action research projects conducted in the field of ELT. It is beyond the scope of this research to provide examples of action research studies carried out in different fields such as sociology (Lewin, 1946; cited in Nixon, 1990) and policy innovation (Smith, 1981; cited in Room, 1986); therefore, the examples will be limited to ELT contexts.

An example is provided by Kroma (1988). In his article entitled “Action research in teaching composition”, he reported that he undertook his research in

the form of action research to find out whether useful hypotheses could be formulated about the acquisition of written English from his students' writings. As a result of the cycles of action research implemented in class, he found out that for his students, writing meant a one-shot activity, that is, an activity with no follow-ups. He suggested that students should develop the habit of drafting, revising and rewriting to improve in writing compositions.

Stuart (1991) conducted a one-year "small-scale classroom action research project" with a group of teachers in Africa. She reported that although the teachers were working at three different educational levels, one of which is teacher training, the findings were potentially generalisable to other teachers and classrooms. As a result of the project, the teachers improved in applying teaching methods which are more student-centered and activity-based such as role-plays and small group discussions.

Bennett (1994) reported in her article entitled "Promoting teacher reflection through action research: What do teachers think?", that she investigated teachers' attitudes towards educational research and their perceptions of themselves as researchers. Survey results indicated that teachers' attitudes towards research improved dramatically as a result of completing action research projects which were found to be an effective means of promoting reflection to improve teaching practice.

Nunan (1994) reported three research projects, undertaken in ESL settings. First, the steps in the classroom research process were outlined. Then for each case the evolution of the project was described, problems were noted and attempts to remedy them were examined. Each case involved professional

development projects for language teachers. Nunan cautions that there are factors that can interfere with the effectiveness of action research such as teachers not being given recognition or time off for doing research and the agenda being controlled by the administration.

Another example of an action research project is from China. In order to introduce the notion of action research into China and to encourage reflective teaching and classroom research among trainee teachers, Thorne and Qiang (1996) conducted a three-year action research project with three groups of teachers. They reported changes in the participants' teaching, compared with other teachers who did not take part in the project. The findings indicated that the participants reported an increased awareness of the teaching and learning process and increased sensitivity about the classroom situation, they improved in classroom research skills and they employed more variety of classroom activities in their classrooms as a result of the action research project.

Conclusion

The ongoing cycle of action research can lead to critical reflection on the teaching experience which encourages the practicing teacher to grasp the underlying principles of problems and their concrete solutions. The concept of action research can then, provide an invaluable means of enhancing *self-development* of an ELT teacher. By self-development, the intent is to suggest the changes that occur in teaching practice in terms of knowledge, skills and awareness.

This study takes knowledge, skills and awareness as the main constructs. The training constituents, which are commonly acknowledged to be knowledge and skills, and the main development constituent, which is awareness, (Freeman, 1989) are integrated and are hence meant to be conducive to an ELT teacher's self-development.

In conclusion, this study aims at finding out whether an action research project can make contributions to the self-development of a professional in the field of English language teaching in changes based on knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice.

This chapter discussed teacher training and development to form a conceptual framework of the study and presented the basic characteristics of action research which are proposed as a means of enhancing an ELT teacher's self-development. The next chapter will present the methodology of the research study.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study investigated the role of action research in the self-development of an ELT teacher. The researcher (Action Research Initiator: ARI) conducted an action research project with an ELT teacher (Teacher as Action Researcher: TAR) at the Department of Basic English (DBE), Middle East Technical University (METU) and acted as an initiator and a guide through the stages of action research. The project was built upon the action research spiral (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988). As mentioned in Chapter 2, the spiral consists of planning, acting, observing and reflecting, on the basis of which TAR formulated new plans, new action, observation and reflection and further re-planning. That is to say, cycles of action research can be repeated many times during the study. The area focused on during the action research project was writing.

This study builds on a previous collaborative action research project conducted at DBE, METU, a three-year ethnographic study carried out with a group of inexperienced and trained teachers to promote small-scale change through collaborative action research within the institution. This study is similar to the previous collaborative action research project at DBE, METU in that it borrowed several of the data collection procedures such as holding regular meetings with the participants and asking the participants to keep journals. A major difference is that this study was conducted with a single subject rather than a group of teachers.

This study is a descriptive case study. By definition, a descriptive case study is “a complete description of the research within its context” (Yin, 1993, p. 5). In a generic sense, a case study observes the characteristic features of an individual unit, e.g. a learner, a teacher or a school, with the purpose of “probing deeply and analyzing intensively the multifarious phenomena that constitute the life cycle of the unit with a view to establishing generalizations about the wider population to which that unit belongs” (Cohen & Manion, 1990, p. 125). Hence, this study sought such description through observing whether an action research project can make contributions to the self-development of an ELT teacher at DBE, METU.

According to Merriam (1990), the description in a case study is usually qualitative. That is, instead of reporting findings in numerical data, case studies use prose and literary techniques to describe and analyze situations. This case study makes use of qualitative data obtained through action research meetings held by ARI and TAR, TAR’s journal entries and interviews with TAR.

In addition, quantitative data were collected by means of comparison of two student essays and through a questionnaire designed by ARI and TAR for TAR’s students. This kind of data collection was not intended at the beginning of the research as a major focus but emerged as a need and was requested by TAR to observe whether her students had improved their writing. Since the quantitative data collection emerged as the research was in progress, it will be discussed and analyzed in Chapter 4.

The Subject, Teacher as Action Researcher (TAR)

The action research project was conducted with a trained ELT teacher who has been working as an English instructor at DBE, METU for six years. She holds a BA in English Language and Literature from Hacettepe University, Ankara. Before working at METU, she taught English for three years at the Mediterranean University in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, where she completed the teacher training program called *Certificate for Overseas Teachers of English* (COTE) issued by Royal Society of Arts (RSA) and Cambridge University. At METU, she received an RSA *Diploma for Overseas Teachers of English* (DOTE), which is a two-year training course run by the Teacher Development Unit of DBE, METU. She also intends to do her MA in teaching English as a Foreign Language. TAR's teaching load includes four hours of general English to upper-intermediate students in the department and two hours of reading and writing lessons to TOEFL students everyday.

Data Collection

Techniques

Three different kinds of qualitative data were collected in this study. During the course of the action research project, ARI and TAR held action research meetings, TAR kept a journal and ARI conducted interviews with TAR before and after the action stages of the third and the fifth cycles. There was also a final interview with TAR at the end of the project.

Procedures

Action Research Meetings

Action research meetings were held at TAR's home on a regular basis over a period of three months, that is from March to June. There was generally one meeting a week adding to a total of 13 meetings. The meeting dates for next meeting were determined by ARI and TAR after the end of each meeting which lasted approximately 30-60 minutes each.

Each meeting had a focus which was pre-determined by ARI or decided together with TAR and ARI in the light of the four stages of action research, which are plan, act, observe and reflect. During the course of these meetings, the cycle of action research was repeated six times.

All of the meetings were tape-recorded and then transcribed (see Appendix A). The data gathered from the transcripts of meetings were coded in categories and are displayed in a summary table in Chapter 4.

TAR's Journal

TAR was asked to keep a journal (see Appendix B) and make an entry after each meeting, noting what decisions had been made, what her interpretations, reflections and observations were and how she had felt during the meetings and the action stages. In addition, she recorded any interesting and new idea that might occur to her while working at school. For this reason, there are more journal entries, which make a total of 23, than the number of the meetings, which is 13.

The due dates of the entries were settled in advance together with ARI and TAR. The journal entries were collected by ARI on the first week of each month, that is to say, from March till June, 1997. Hence, the journal entries were

submitted to ARI at three different times. In this way, ARI was able to follow regularly TAR's reflections on the experience from her journal entries and observe the process from a source other than the transcripts of the meetings. The journal entries were coded for content and will be displayed in tables in Chapter 4.

Interviews

In a descriptive case study of a qualitative nature, interviewing is one of the major sources of qualitative data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study. Patton (1980; cited in Merriam, 1990) claims that interviewing is believed to be one of the best ways to find out what is in and on someone else's mind.

In this study, there are two different kinds of interviews that ARI conducted with TAR. They are (a) pre- and post-action interviews and (b) a final interview (see Appendix C).

Pre- and Post-action Interviews

As mentioned earlier, the four main stages of action research, which are plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) were repeated in a cyclical fashion. The purpose of these pre- and post- action interviews was to investigate what was happening at the action stages of the cycles. The cycle of the action research spiral was implemented six times during the project. Pre- and post-action interviews were administered only in the third and the fifth cycles of the action research project due to the mismatch of ARI's and TAR's schedules. Both pre- and post-action interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed (see Appendix D). The interview questions could not be piloted because they were specific to TAR's teaching situation.

Pre-action interviews.

Pre-action interviews were conducted before the action stage of the project. The purpose of pre-action interviews was to investigate what objective TAR had in mind before the actual implementation of the action. They were planned but unstructured interviews, which means that the conversation between ARI and TAR was “more like a free-flowing conversation” (Nunan, 1989, p. 60) but with a pre-determined purpose in mind. Each interview lasted approximately 5-10 minutes. There were one or two opening questions and ARI sometimes asked questions to probe or to clarify (see Appendix D).

Post-action interviews.

Post-action interviews were administered after the action stages of the research project in the third and the fifth cycles for three purposes; to see if the objective of the lessons had been accomplished, to discuss TAR’s teaching experience and feelings after the action and to guide TAR into the coming reflection stage of the project. ARI used a structured type of interview, the questions of which were adapted from Richards and Lockhart (1994, p. 16) (see Appendix C). Hence, the post-action interviews were guided by these questions and each lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. The post-action interviews consisted of 16 questions. However, ARI sometimes needed to ask extra questions to probe or to clarify (see Appendix D).

Final Interview

The final interview was administered at the end of the action research project. ARI prepared the interview questions (see Appendix C) according to the research questions. The purpose of the interview was to investigate TAR’s overall

attitude towards action research at the end of the project. The final interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and consisted of 14 questions. Responses to 11 of the questions will be displayed under categories in Chapter 4 and the remaining three responses, which are for questions 7, 8, and 9 will be discussed in Chapter 5 since they are not directly related to the research questions.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data gathered from the action research meetings were analyzed by using an event-listing technique (Cohen & Manion, 1994) and coding according to action research stages which are plan, act, observe and reflect. TAR's journal entries and the interview results were analyzed by coding the data into four main categories which are action research attitude, knowledge, skill and awareness. Sub-categories emerged inductively during the coding process.

Quantitative data that TAR wished to collect to observe her students' achievement were analyzed through interpretive and descriptive statistical procedures. A comparison of students' first and last essays were done by using a t-test analysis. In addition, a questionnaire measuring the attitude towards pre-writing activities was administered to TAR's students.

CHAPTER 4 DATA ANALYSIS

Overview of the study

The purpose of this study was to find out whether conducting action research can help enhance an ELT teacher's self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice. The researcher (Action Research Initiator: ARI) initiated an action research project within the educational context of the Department of Basic English (DBE) at Middle East Technical University (METU) with a colleague (Teacher as Action Researcher: TAR). TAR started to carry out the action research project in her upper-intermediate class at the DBE, METU with the guidance of ARI. They worked collaboratively organizing regular meetings during a period of three months and implemented the stages of action research which are planning, acting, observing and reflecting, as suggested by Kemmis and McTaggart (1988). The action research spiral re-cycled six times during this research.

Qualitative data were collected through transcripts of action research meetings, TAR's journal entries, and interviews conducted before and after the action stages of the third and the fifth cycles. A final interview was also conducted at the end of the action research project. Analysis of the qualitative data involved coding and summarizing the action research meetings and coding the journal entries and interviews in the light of the research questions.

Towards the end of the research, TAR wished to observe more closely and formally her students' improvement; therefore, quantitative data were also collected through a questionnaire given to TAR's students and a comparison of

her students' first and last essays. To analyze the questionnaire, the means of questionnaire responses were calculated and displayed. A T-test analysis was used to measure the difference between the means of the two sets of writing scores. As stated before, the quantitative part of the research emerged during the course of the action research project and can be considered as data showing whether TAR's students improved or not as a result of the action research project.

Qualitative Data Analysis

The first stage of qualitative data analysis is the reduction of data, which is the "process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions"; the vast amount of words, sentences and paragraphs have to be reduced to what is of most importance and interest (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). According to Seidman (1991), reducing the data inductively rather than deductively is of utmost importance. This study used both inductive and deductive reductions. That is to say, some categories were determined previously on the basis of the research questions but some emerged during the process of reduction and coding.

Coding the qualitative data is a central procedure in qualitative research. Coding itself is the analysis of qualitative data and requires the researcher to review "a set of field notes, transcribed and synthesized, and to dissect them meaningfully while keeping the relations between the parts intact" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56). Another definition of coding is "the translation of question responses and respondent information to specific categories for the purpose of analysis". (Kerlinger, 1989; cited in Cohen & Manion, p. 323). In the

process of coding, *codes* are the cornerstones of the analysis. They are “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) and can be put together with chunks in various sizes such as words, phrases and sentences. In this research, analysis of the qualitative data was done through coding the transcripts of action research meetings in respect to action research stages. The journal entries of TAR, and the interviews conducted by ARI were coded for content particularly in respect to the themes of the research questions. The coded data were then summarized or arranged in code categories.

A reliability check was done by “check-coding” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 64). In other words, the researcher worked separately with a second coder, who was a colleague at the DBE, METU to determine whether two coders used more or less the same codes for the same blocks of data. First, the researcher explained to the second coder how the coding system worked and what code categories existed. Then the second coder was given half of TAR’s journal entries and asked to place the sentences in the journal under the categories provided. The second coder was in agreement with the researcher in most cases. However, there were times when they disagreed since it was sometimes difficult to decide under which category the data should be placed. After reviewing and discussing the data, they came to an agreement. This experience was very beneficial because it provided the researcher with a common vision of what the code categories mean and which blocks of data best fit which code category.

As Miles and Huberman assert (1994), in qualitative research understanding of how the events flow throughout the research is of considerable

importance. Building up a chronology of events facilitates the process of sorting different domains of events. That is why, first of all, the events that took place during the action research meetings were summarized and analyzed in terms of the action research stages that recycled during the project.

Summary of Action Research Meetings

It should be noted that the meetings had an organic nature with a natural flow of a discussion; therefore, the issues and events are listed as they emerged during the meetings. The aim of summarizing the events is to find out whether the major stages of action research which are plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) took place or not and how many times the cycles of action research were repeated. The term, “event” is used to refer to activities that took place during the course of meetings and involves what ARI and TAR said as well as their decisions and discussions. A summary of the events that took place during the meetings of the action research project by ARI and TAR is listed in Table 2. In addition, the table provides the meeting number, its date and the stages of action research.

Table 2

Summary of Action Research (AR) Meetings

Meetings and Dates	Stages of AR	Events
Meeting 1 Mar. 14 1997	Initial Reflection Problem Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARI introduces AR to TAR by giving a self-prepared handout. • TAR does initial reflection on problem identification. • ARI and TAR discusses the concept of change. • ARI informs TAR about the characteristics, stages and cyclical nature of AR. • ARI reads an example of AR study. • TAR suggests ARI's observing her in class and ARI suggests TAR's keeping a journal. They agree to do both. • ARI mentions her previous AR experience at METU. • ARI and TAR discuss collaboration and the role of ARI in this research. • TAR talks about her students and problems like lesson preparation, motivation, discussion and writing.
Meeting 2 Mar. 20 1997	Initial Reflection Problem Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR talks about her problem in writing lessons. • TAR states her problem by saying that she doesn't know how to guide her students in writing, especially in argumentative writing and therefore students feel lost. • TAR decides to deal with free writing and argumentative writing. • TAR mentions how her students go about writing. • TAR and ARI discuss what to do. • ARI suggests reading about free and argumentative writing and TAR agrees. • TAR asks where to find related books. • TAR and ARI decide to conduct a mini survey asking students their opinions about writing. • TAR and ARI decide on due dates for journals and talk about when and what to write in the journal.
Meeting 3 Mar. 29 1997	Lit Review Plan (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARI and TAR examine writing books that they have brought with and a lit review of a thesis on using role-play in argumentative writing. • ARI and TAR talk about pre-, while and post-writing stages. • TAR agrees to look for guidelines to assess her students' essays. • TAR decides to employ extra writing activities rather than the ones in their course book. • TAR reflects on the present writing activities in the course book and decides to prepare students for writing before they start the activity. • TAR and ARI talk about time allocated for writing in the department's program. • TAR and ARI discuss how many extra activities TAR can do before

the midterm.

- TAR says she feels guilty for not having guided her students properly in writing and wants to do something about it.
- TAR examines the books again and chooses the books that she might be using.
- TAR decides to motivate the students to write by choosing interesting topics.
- TAR plans to prepare an extra writing activity for the coming week.
- ARI and TAR discuss what to write in the journal and when.

Meeting 4 Apr. 4, 1997	Act & Observe Reflect Plan(2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR shows ARI her journal and ARI shows TAR a guideline to assess students' essays. • TAR talks about a writing book that she read and liked. She tells how she used an activity from that book in class. • TAR explains how the first action went in class. • TAR reflects on the first action which is a general introduction to organization of writing in general. • TAR wants to do another activity which is on argumentative writing. • TAR and ARI seek some more knowledge from the thesis on argumentative writing. • TAR hesitates to use role-play in her class. • TAR discusses the writing course book that she uses and decides to do another similar general writing activity and make an introduction to argumentative writing. • TAR and ARI agree on ARI's observing TAR in the next action.
Meeting 5 April 12, 1997	Plan (2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR mentions why she could not do what she has planned to do. • TAR and ARI discuss giving questionnaire to students. • TAR decides to do an activity on brainstorming, outlining and organizing ideas.
Meeting 6 April 24, 1997	Act & Observe Reflect Plan (3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR tells ARI the outlining and mind-mapping activity she did in class. • TAR reports her observations and reflects on the action • TAR points out that students have used outlining in their exam although they were not asked to do so. • TAR and ARI set the date and time for the next action which ARI will observe. • TAR repeats her plan for the action which is an introduction on how to organize argumentative writing. • TAR asks how to assess the writings and reminds ARI about the 5-scale criteria.
Meeting 7 May 7, 1997	Act & Observe Reflect Plan (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR and ARI discuss the action that ARI observed. • TAR summarizes the stages of the lesson. • TAR mentions her students' are getting better in organization but their grammar and choice of words are poor. • TAR decides to take more action in class.

- ARI asks for the photocopies of students' writings.
- ARI and TAR prepare schedule for the coming activities.
- ARI suggests integrating role-playing and discussion to writing argumentative essays and TAR agrees to do it.
- ARI and TAR read action research stages from Richards and Lockhart's book and decide that one of the cycles of action research is over.
- For the next cycle, TAR states that she wants to go on giving her students more practice on writing argumentative essays and focus on pre-writing activities.
- TAR makes a plan for the next argumentative writing through role-playing and discussion.
- TAR thinks of some interesting topics that may attract students' attention.

Meeting 8 May 9, 1997	Act &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR reports her action in class to ARI -activity on argumentative writing and the topic is "Should everybody go to university?" • TAR mentions a mistake she did in handling the lesson. • TAR tells ARI that she provided a model outline and essay for the students. • TAR says that if she wasn't doing action research, she wouldn't be doing extra writing activities in class. • TAR realizes that it is not a fair thing to give a topic to students and ask them to write without preparation. • TAR talks about the grades of the essays that students did previously. She says that they are better in organization. • TAR tells ARI that she wants to compare her students' essays. • TAR feels happy about the action. • TAR makes a plan for the next action.
	Observe	
	Reflect	
	Plan (5)	

Meeting 9 May 20, 1997	Plan (5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR examines the methodology chapter of a thesis on using role-playing in argumentative writing. • TAR is convinced to use role-plays in her class. • TAR and ARI discuss that role-playing can be a different means of what brainstorming and mind-mapping do. • TAR and ARI brainstorm interesting topics. • TAR and ARI discuss the lesson plan of the next action. • TAR decides to choose taking attendance as a topic. • ARI and TAR set a date and time for ARI's second observation.
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Meeting 10 May 22, 1997	Act &	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR and ARI discuss the action that ARI observed. • TAR and ARI reflect on the action. • TAR tells ARI that role-playing is a good technique. • ARI suggests TAR's doing one more role-play activity that leads to argumentative writing.
	Observe	
	Reflect	

Meeting 11 May 30, 1997	Plan (6)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARI and TAR devise a questionnaire to assess students' attitude towards pre-writing activities. • ARI and TAR discuss what free writing and controlled writing is. • ARI asks TAR what her focus has been in the previous stages of action research.
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- ARI mentions the difficulty of improving students' writing in terms of accuracy.
- ARI and TAR discuss the statements to include in the questionnaire that has a Lickert scale.
- ARI informs TAR about the basic characteristics of a Lickert scale questionnaire.
- ARI and TAR prepare the first draft of the questionnaire with ten statements about pre-writing activities.
- TAR plans to employ one last activity and finally she plans to give the questionnaire measuring students' attitude towards pre-writing activities (mind-mapping, outlining and role-playing) done in class.
- TAR thinks of an interesting writing topic.

Meeting 12 June 4, 1997	Act & Observe Reflect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR explains how she finds preparing a questionnaire. • ARI informs TAR on how to evaluate the questionnaire. • TAR and ARI complete the final draft of the questionnaire. • ARI plans to get the questionnaire results the next day. • ARI explains TAR how to analyze the open-ended section of the questionnaire. • TAR reflects on the last action she implemented in class. • TAR mentions the topic and students' reactions and how some students took part in the role-play activity. • TAR and ARI decide to compare the first and the last writings of the students. • TAR thinks of doing process writing if she goes on doing action research the next semester.
Meeting 13 July 1, 1997	Final wrap-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TAR tells ARI that she would actually continue the project if the semester didn't end. • TAR and ARI evaluate students' questionnaire by taking the means and the percentage of frequency of the responses. • TAR and ARI read students' first and last writings according to a 5-scale-criterion and compares the results of the two writing scores and see the improvement in their writing by using a T-test analysis. • Finally, ARI interviews TAR asking questions about the action research project in general.

Note: The numbers in parenthesis after "Plan" indicate the number of action research cycles

This initial analysis enabled the identification of the stages of the action research project. In meetings 1 and 2, for example, initial reflection on the identification of the problem was made. In meeting 3, literature was reviewed about the problem and a plan of action was devised. The plan of action continued in meeting 3. After the meeting, action in the classroom took place and in meeting

4, observation and reflection on the first action took place. Here the first cycle of action research was over and another cycle started by making a new plan. The plan of the second action continued in meeting 5. After the meeting, the second plan was implemented in class and in meeting 6, the action was observed and reflected on. That was the end of the second cycle. A new plan was made in meeting 6 and after the third action in class took place, observation and reflection on the action was made in meeting 7 marking the start of a new cycle which is cycle four. After the new plan in meeting 7, the fourth action took place and its observation and reflection was made in meeting 8 where a new cycle began by making another plan. For the fifth action, the plan was made in meeting 9 and after the action took place in class, it was observed and reflected upon in meeting 10. The last cycle, which is the sixth cycle, started in meeting 11 and ended in meeting 12 after the observation and reflection stages of the last action.

It should be noted that although a redefinition of the problem is possible in the action research process, TAR wanted to go on dealing with the same problem which was *poor organization in writing*. She realized after the third cycle of the project that having students prepare for writing and facilitating their organization by pre-writing activities would not address all of the students' writing problems. Students also had grammar problems (see Table 2 for Meeting 7). However, she decided to go on dealing with the organization problem in writing as she had previously identified so that her students could improve organizing their essays via pre-writing activities. She also pointed out that if the semester had not come to an end, she would probably have continued carrying out actions in her class and implementing these four stages of action research (see Table 2 for Meeting 13).

Journal Analysis

Qualitative data from the journal entries were analyzed by coding (see Appendix G). The transcripts of TAR's journal were coded according to categories. In order to code the qualitative data in these journal entries, four main categories were pre-determined in light of the research questions. The sub-categories emerged inductively during the coding process.

The category names were reduced to three-letter-acronyms to facilitate the process of coding by shortening the length of the codes. Below is the list of the codes and their acronyms. The major code categories are shown in bold type and those that are indented and have a dash in front are the sub-categories. Everything that TAR wrote in her journal was coded and presented under these categories.

Table 3

Code Categories and their Acronyms for the Analysis of TAR's Journal Entries

Acronyms	Code Categories
ARA	Action Research Attitude
KNO	Knowledge
-AR	Action Research
-WRI	Writing
SKI	Skill
-TWR	Teaching Writing
-RES	Research
AWA	Awareness
-REF	Reflection
-TFE	TAR's Feelings
-SPO	Students' Point of View

The first category is *Action Research Attitude* (ARA) which contains all the related direct quotations from TAR's entries in reaction to the project itself.

The second category is the *Knowledge* (KNO) category. It has two sub-categories, one of which includes knowledge about *writing* (WRI) and the other,

knowledge about *Action Research* itself (AR). The third category is *Skill* (SKI), which includes skills of *teaching writing* (TWR) and *research* skills (RES). The fourth main category is *Awareness* (AWA), with three sub-categories namely *reflection* (REF), *TAR's feelings* (TFE) and *students' point of view* (SPO).

It should be emphasized that all the main categories were determined in light of the research objective. In other words, they are based on the research questions which investigate whether an action research project can contribute to the self-development of an ELT teacher in terms of knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice. Sub-categories emerged in the course of the study and were assigned to the major research categories.

The following four tables display the analysis of the qualitative data gathered from TAR's journal entries. Each table consists of one of the main categories of the coding system mentioned previously and its sub-categories, if any. As noted earlier, the sub-categories are shown with a dash in front of the acronym. Quotations from the journal entries which fit under the main and sub-categories are presented in the tables. The statements on the right are all of the direct quotations from TAR's journal entries. The place of the quotation can be found in Appendix B according to the journal entry number which is indicated after JE (JE 1 is Journal Entry number 1). In some of the quotations, pronoun references and clarification of the context needed to be provided. These references and clarifications are in parentheses in italics. Table 4 presents the first category (ARA) of coding which includes TAR's attitudes towards action research.

Table 4

Main Code Category 1 (Action Research Attitude)

Code Category	Selected Journal Entries
ARA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I like the idea of keeping a journal. (JE 1) • I like the whole idea, in fact. (JE 1) • I was confused at first because I couldn't decide what problem to choose and concentrate on. But in our second meeting, I came up with the idea and defined the problem in my class. (JE 1) • I really like being involved in this project. (JE 1) • I hope I can achieve something positive in the end. (JE 1) • Thanks to ARI, with this action research thing, I became aware that once you start dealing with a problem rather than avoid it, you are half way through the solution of the problem. You realize that you are in fact capable of solving the problem. You also feel better as you, at least, try to work out the problem, not just sit and feel guilty about it. (JE 19)

Note: JE= Journal Entry (see Appendix B)

It can be seen that TAR's attitude towards action research was stated at the very beginning and at the end of the journal. Although TAR felt confused about the action research steps at the beginning, in the end she felt that she enjoyed the action research project since it gave her an opportunity to be aware of a problem in her class and solve it.

Table 5 displays the coded data indicating what knowledge TAR has reported about language teaching/learning. This category has two sub-categories which are *writing* (WRI) and *action research* (AR).

Table 5

Main Code Category 2 (Knowledge)

Code Category	Selected Journal Entries
KNO	
-WRI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We went through the steps of writing an essay: preparing to write, choosing a topic, deciding on its purpose and audience, gathering the material and ideas through reading, discussion in class, mind maps, brainstorming, list making, planning, organizing the ideas, writing the first draft, revising and writing the final version. (JE 4) • I told them (<i>the students</i>) outlining is just a technique which will help them organize their ideas. (JE 4) • I know how to deal with writing. (JE 19) • <i>She (ARI)</i> mentioned T-test, which hopefully I'll learn more about next year while doing MA TEFL course. She said the T-test showed that there is considerable improvement in my students' writings. (JE 22)
-AR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Now that we've finished the first cycle, i.e. we've been through planning, acting, observing, and reflecting -that's what we did at today's meeting-, we will start the second cycle. For the first step of the second cycle, planning, ARI and I are going to design/plan a role play activity as a pre-writing activity. (JE 12) • We'll plan a lesson for our second cycle in the action research. (JE 13) • (<i>While preparing a questionnaire</i>) It is important to test only one thing in one question and the wording of the question is also important. Each question must test a different thing and it must serve our purpose i.e. the answer to the question must clearly reveal the students' attitude towards writing. (JE 20)

Note: JE= Journal Entry (Appendix B)

Sub-categories: -WRI= Writing; -AR= Action Research

From the books that TAR read, she obtained theoretical knowledge about writing before she employed activities in her classroom during the action stages of the action research project. She mentioned the major steps of writing such as preparing to write and gathering ideas. She also explained what the outlining technique is and listed some other pre-writing activities. These are pieces of

knowledge related to writing. The other sub-category is the knowledge of action research. She pointed out the major stages of action research and seemed to be informed about the cyclical nature of action research.

The third category is the *Skill* (SKI) category. Table 6 includes TAR's sentences related to this category with two sub-categories, *teaching writing* (TWR) skills and *research* (RES) skills.

Table 6

Main Code Category 3 (Skill)

Code Category	Selected Journal Entries
SKI	
-TWR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I drew my students' attention to outlining technique while organizing their ideas. (JE 4) • I emphasized the importance of writing several drafts. (JE 4) • I am going to allocate the class hour for the pre-writing activities such as discussions and brainstorming ideas. I'll help my students to gather the material for their writing, to organize their ideas by making the outline of their writing and writing their drafts. (JE 4) • In fact I'm planning to do <i>it (getting students to write an argumentative essay)</i> on the blackboard by eliciting ideas from the students. (JE 4) • We brainstormed ideas, words related to country life and I drew a mind map on the board. Then, we did the outlining. We organized the paragraphs and their order in the essay. (JE 6) • My objectives are: By the end of the lesson, the students will have a) become familiar with or rather 'revise' the general characteristics of the argumentative essay. b) practiced organizing their thoughts by doing outlining for the argumentative essay. (JE 9) • I got my students to suggest support ideas for the topic. (JE 10) • I feel that with a more systematic way, I can guide my students through <i>this difficult skill (writing)</i> and prevent them from feeling lost. (JE 12) • After the brainstorming through elicitation and discussion, I asked the

students to draw the outline of their essays and after we discussed their outlines and write one on blackboard together as a model, I told the students to write their essays at home, where they prefer writing their essays. (JE 12)

- This was the first time I was employing a role-play activity after a long time just because of my fears.
 - I've marked my students' essays according to Samer's marking scale. (JE 17)
 - I used *his (Samer's)* idea of using role-play activities as a pre-writing activity and I used his marking scale, which I found very useful. (JE 18)
 - Today I employed another role-playing activity in class. (JE 19)
 - I also encouraged *them (students)* by saying that once they adopt a role-play personality, they'll come up with a lot of ideas and start to understand the feelings of those characters. (JE 19)
 - After the activity, I got them to make the outline of their essays and write at home. (JE 19)
- RES
- We'll be able to get an idea about *this (how students' writings have improved)* when we give them a questionnaire in the last week of the semester. (JE 17)
 - With this questionnaire, I will be able to get my students' insights about the pre-writing activities: mind-mapping, making outline, discussions, role-play activities we did in class.
 - In our next session, ARI and I are going to finalize the questionnaire to be given to the students. I hope my students are positive about the things we did about writing. (JE 19)
 - I feel I need to make further studies in how to teach writing now. (JE 19)

Note: SKI= Skill; Sub-categories: -TWR= Teaching Writing; -RES= Research
JE= Journal Entry (Appendix B)

Among the skills TAR reported related to teaching writing were using pre-writing activities such as outlining and mind-mapping, conducting role play activities and lesson preparation. Another type of skills she mentioned was research skills such as preparing and administering a questionnaire in her class.

The next table, which is Table 7, displays the results of data analysis in terms of enhancement of TAR's awareness of her teaching practice. The Awareness (AWA) category has three sub-categories which are reflection (REF), teacher's feelings (TFE), and students' point of view (SPO).

Table 7

Main Code Category 4 (Awareness)

Code Category	Selected Journal Entries
AWA	
-TFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I don't feel confident <i>in this area (writing)</i>. I feel lost in the classroom and haven't been able to give my students a sound help. (JE 1) • Having started to do something about a problem that really disturbs me, I feel better and I believe I can overcome this problem. (JE 1) • Now I feel better. (JE 4) • <i>This (students' finding mind-maps and outlining very useful)</i> encouraged me and made me feel I'm on the right track! (JE 6) • I liked it <i>(students' using outlining technique in the exam)</i>. (JE 7) • The students expressed their ideas but I feel I did most of the task myself. (JE 11) • I still feel they haven't made much progress other than their improvement in organizing their thoughts. (JE 11) • Then I looked back my students first essays - the ones they wrote at the beginning of the semester- hoping that I could see a dramatic change in their writings. I was disappointed. (JE 14) • <i>This (students' having better organizations)</i> is a great relief. (JE 14) • It's been a long time since I last employed a role play activity in class. Although I feel a bit uneasy about it, I think it will be nice to try a new thing in class plus to break the monotony of the classroom atmosphere. (JE 14) • I feel a bit uneasy as I haven't done such activities with these students before. I'm not sure if they will be willing to participate in the activity or not. I hope they'll enjoy it. • I always hesitated to employ such <i>an activity (role-play activity)</i> thinking that my students would not like it. (JE 16) • <i>This (students' liking role-play activity)</i> made me happy and built up my confidence. (JE 16) • I like it <i>(getting students to organize their essays)</i> very much. I feel that I've accomplished something. (JE 17) • I already feel I've achieved <i>something. (having students improve in writing)</i> (JE 18) • I have an idea now about how to go about writing lessons. I know that I

have great responsibility in my students' attitude towards writing. (JE 18)

- I really feel excited and curious to see their essays! (*after role-play activity*) I really enjoy it. (JE 18)
- Considering the situation (*i.e. no writing can be done in other classrooms*), I feel better as I'm doing something for my students. (JE 19)
- I've gained confidence in teaching writing and I could see the change in the atmosphere of writing lessons. (JE 19)
- When I looked through the questionnaire, I saw that in general *their (students')* attitude was positive, which made me relieved. (JE 21)
- *This (result of the questionnaire showing students' positive attitude towards pre-writing activities)* encouraged me to go about the writing lessons in the same way. Now I feel enthusiastic about teaching writing. Now that I've seen I can do something about this once-dreadful teaching point, I'm eager to work more systematically on it right from the beginning of the classes. (JE 22)

-SPO

- Students feel lost (*in writing*). (JE 1)
- Most of them wrote about not knowing how to write because they are not used to this kind of writing. Some of them wrote about the difficulty of writing in English because it requires a skill. Some of them asked for a model sentence. Some of them said that it was difficult for them to write their essays in class and in groups and they said that they preferred to write their essays at home. (JE 2)
- I think *it (introduction to writing)* gave my students an idea of the process of writing. (JE 4)
- The students agreed to do *that (writing essays at home)*. They seemed to be interested. (JE 4)
- Some of my students said that they found mind-maps and outlining very useful. (JE 6)
- I looked at my students' question papers, I noticed that some of my students took notes, did the outlining and jotted down some of their ideas before writing. (JE 7)
- I admit that the organization of their essays are better now. However, I realize that *they (students' writings in the exam)* are still not good essays. They are full of grammar mistakes and they are so simple and superficial (!). They show no evidence of careful preparation. (JE 9)
- My students found it difficult to organize the points because they were expected to refute an idea, in which they need to start with "con", rather than "pro". In the previous activity we directly started with "pro", so it was new to them. But unfortunately, as I didn't draw their attention to this kind of argument, they got confused. (JE 13)
- There is something which implies that my efforts have been beneficial to some of my students if not to all: Their organizations are better! (JE 14)
- Well, maybe it's wrong to say that there has been no change - this is true for good students. I have some students whose essays were disappointing on my part, but who can write better now. At least, they can organize their ideas in a better way now. However, I have one or two students, who are, I believe, hopeless. There's something wrong in their way of thinking. I should be ashamed to say such things for my students but I don't think I can be helpful to those ones. (JE 14)

- I think it will be nice for the students to have a change. (*adapting a role-play activity for class*) (JE 14)
- They could do it very well and I realized that they enjoyed it as well.
- My students expressed their opinions through *the activity (role-play activity)* and I wonder how well they are going to write their essays on the topic. (JE 16)
- In general, there is an improvement in my students' organizing their essays. (JE 17)
- My students got the idea of organization and argumentative essay. (JE 17)
- My insisting on their making outline before writing their essays has had a positive effect, I think. My best/bright students could still write good essays but I'm sure they have learnt something as well as the others. (JE 17)
- I can see my students writings have improved to a certain extent (JE 18)
- If they (students) have left unassisted, they feel lost and don't know what and how to write. However, if they are guided and helped to gather ideas through brain storming, discussions, role-plays, they stop seeing writing as a nightmare and something to avoid. (JE 18)
- The students could come up with lots of ideas with which they exploited TAR from various points of view. (JE 19)
- Since *they (students)* were exposed to guided writing last semester, they were lost when they were asked to write freely on a topic without being given any cues to elaborate on. (JE 19)
- I could see that contrary to my assumptions, my students could handle the role-play activities, discussions etc. with a little guidance from me. I could see that even one of my poorest repeat students started to write well-organized essays. (JE 19)
- In this class, my students wanted to write their essays at home saying that they couldn't concentrate on their writings in class. (JE 19)
- Once the students get what they need, and what is necessary for them before they are asked to produce anything in a foreign language, they feel more confident and they are likely to become more successful. I could see it in my students' writings. (JE 22)

-REF

- In the light of the feedback I got from my students, I think it is a good idea to use the class hour to guide the students in their preparations for their essays discussing which points should be included and which are irrelevant. (JE 2)
- I can see they've written better - their ideas were better organized this time. I liked it. Still, some of my students wrote their essays just for the sake of doing their homework and I think they need more practice. (JE 6)
- Writing is not a skill to be acquired immediately. I can't expect my students to start writing wonderfully but at least I can see that I can help them for the habit of preparing for writing before they actually start writing, which I believe, will help them express their ideas better in an organized way. (JE 6)
- To be honest, I didn't think of the objectives of the lesson then. (JE 9)
- Then again when I think of the fact that the students have very limited

- time in the exams, they can't be expected to produce masterpieces! (JE 9)
- All in all, I don't think it was a good lesson. It could have been better. (JE 9)
 - When I think over the lesson that ARI observed, I can say that it wasn't an effective one. (JE 11)
 - My students also need to improve their vocabulary, grammar, choice of words and style. This is such a broad issue I am a bit discouraged and I realize it needs much more effort and a well-prepared and well-organized teaching strategy! (JE 11)
 - At this meeting, I've come to realize that a change is not necessarily expected to take place in the students or in the problem I've chosen, but it could also take place in me, as teacher. When I consider my experience in this aspect, I can say that I have gained an awareness in a particular language skill, in this case, writing. (JE 12)
 - I think it could have been better to talk about several possible outlines/organizations for argumentative essays in the first lesson - introduction to argumentative essays. (JE 13)
 - I realized that writing is a skill which is directly related to the person's mother tongue. If a student can write well in his or her own language, he or she will naturally write better in another language than those who are not good at writing. (JE 15)
 - Still I'm not so sure about my students' attitude towards writing because sometimes I can see that they're reluctant to write. I think this is not to do with me but with the nature of writing: After all it needs some time to sit down and concentrate on it and sweat! How many teenagers like doing it? I bet not many do. (JE 18)
 - I know the situation in other classes from their teachers and they stopped writing essays long before. The teachers said in the meetings that the students didn't want to write and they couldn't get them to write so they gave up insisting. (JE 19)
 - These are important implications for my teaching writing. If I could achieve these with such a few activities, I could achieve more by applying more activities in a more systematic, organized way, starting right from the beginning of the semester. (JE 19)
 - Next time, I want to try and make my students write in class-I want to try process writing which I never dared employ in class before (JE 19)
 - While going over the questionnaire, I realized that it was not an easy thing to do. It requires careful thinking. (JE 20)
 - I've come to realize the importance of "lead-in", "warm-up" and "pre-activities" in teaching and learning a foreign language. (JE 22)

Note: AWA= Awareness; Sub-categories: -TFE= Teacher's Feelings; -SPO= Students' Point of View; -REF= Reflection; JE= Journal Entry (Appendix B)

For certain situations, TAR reported not only her negative feelings such as helplessness (JE 1), uneasiness (JE 14) and disappointment (JE 14) but also her positive feelings such as excitement (JE 18), confidence (JE 16 & 19) and

encouragement (JE 22). She was also aware of her students' feelings and achievement. She observed her students' performance in organizing their essays and participating in the discussions. She also reflected on her teaching in general. She drew conclusions by reporting, for example, that one's success in writing in a second language might be related to one's writing ability in native language.

Interview Analysis

As stated in Chapter 3, there were two kinds of interviews administered in the study. The first type was pre- and post-action interviews and the second one was the final interview. All the interview responses were tape-recorded and transcribed (see Appendix D).

Analysis of Pre- and Post-action Interviews

Pre- and post-action interviews were administered twice during the action research project. The first interviews took place in the third cycle and the second, in the fifth cycle of the action research project. The purpose of the pre-action interviews was to investigate whether the objective of the next action that would be implemented in class was clear to TAR and to find out what expectations she had from the lesson. The purpose of the post-action interviews was to find out whether the objective of the lesson had been accomplished or not. Another purpose was to lead to the reflection stage of the action research project.

In the light of the purpose of the interviews, the data from the interview responses were reduced and coded into categories. Both the first and the second pre- and post- action interview responses were grouped according to categories shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Code Categories and their Acronyms for the Analysis of Pre- and Post-actionInterviews

Pre-action Interview 1 & 2 Code Categories		Post-action Interview 1 & 2: Code Categories	
OBJ	Objective(s)	REF-OBJ	Reflection on objective(s)
-RTT	Related to TAR	-POS	Positive
-RTS	Related to students	-NEG	Negative

By using these categories, data which were collected from the pre- and post-action interviews were coded. Under the categories, TAR's remarks were put in note forms indicating whether she was aware of her objective before the action and her weaknesses and strengths after the action. Table 9 displays the analysis of pre- and post-action interviews 1 & 2 .

Table 9

Analysis of Pre- and Post-action Interviews

1st Pre-action Interview Responses	1st Post-action Interview Responses
OBJ	REF-OBJ
-RTT	-POS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduce basic characteristics of students' writings • be a model for students • not expect much from students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of outlining before writing • use of brainstorming • successful elicitation
-RTS	-NEG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expected to have better organization • expected to feel more confident in writing • expected to improve in writing an argumentative essay 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • main goal not accomplished • not effective teaching material • not something new for students • not a well-prepared lesson • not a successful overall handling of the lesson • too teacher-centered • a bit discouraged • not a good lesson
2nd Pre-action Interview Responses	2nd Post-action Interview Responses
OBJ	REF-OBJ
-RTT	-POS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expect to facilitate students writing • hope not to feel discouraged to use role-plays • more prepared this time • a bit nervous because role-play to be used for the first time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • goals accomplished • not too teacher-dominated • students enjoyed the lesson • students still eager to talk towards the end of discussion and role-playing • change in a stage of lesson plan, which avoided repetition and boredom • satisfaction experienced
-RTS	-NEG
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • expected to brainstorm their ideas before writing • expected to clarify their arguments by outlining • expected enjoy the activity • might be reluctant to participate in role-playing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • should have asked students to reflect back instructions • grouping the students could have been faster

Note: OBJ= Objective; Sub-categories: -RTT= Related to TAR; -RTS= Related to Students; REF-OBJ= Reflection on Objectives; Sub-categories: -POS= Positive, -NEG= Negative

The result of the analysis of the responses of the first and the second pre- and post-action interviews indicate that in the first action mentioned, which was during the third action stage of the project, TAR did not really accomplish her goal of the lesson due to the fact that she was not well-prepared. However, in the second action mentioned, which was the fifth action of the project TAR achieved her objective despite the fact that she was worried about employing a role-play activity for the first time. Both pre-action interview responses indicate that TAR had objectives in mind, concerning herself and her students. She was much more prepared for the lesson as can be seen in the second pre-action interview response. The responses given in the first and the second post-action interviews show that TAR was able to think critically and reflect on her action in class considering both the positive and the negative sides of her teaching.

Analysis of Final Interview

Out of 14 questions in the final interview (see Appendix C), the responses to 11 of them were used for analysis. The remaining three, which are questions 7, 8 and 9 will be discussed in Chapter 5 since they are not directly related to the research questions.

After the responses of TAR had been transcribed, they were coded under four main categories which were determined previously in the light of the major research questions. One main category has four sub-categories, another has two and the others have none. The sub-categories are indicated by a dash in front and are written in normal non-bold type. The categories, sub-categories and their three-letter acronyms are presented below in Table 10.

Table 10

Code Categories and their Acronyms for the Analysis of the Final Interview

Acronyms	Code Categories
ARA	Action Research Attitude
-GEN	General
-BEG	Beginning of the project
-DUR	During the project
-END	End of the project
KNO	Knowledge
SKI	Skill
AWA	Awareness
-TFE	TAR's feelings
-STI	Students' improvement

The responses were categorized by ARI under these categories for the purpose of answering the research questions. Under each category, related responses are presented in note form. The analysis is shown in Table 11.

Table 11

Analysis of the Final Interview

Code Categories	TAR's Responses in note form
ARA -GEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more effective, enjoyable and fruitful teaching with more preparation. • very useful and effective in improving both teacher and student effectiveness in language teaching/learning • observation and reflection stage most useful • more objective view of herself and her class • beneficial for the DBE, METU • enables teachers to get together and share ideas • creates a sense of unity among teachers • interesting with any teacher with the sense of responsibility to get involved in the action research project • raises the quality of teaching • enhances problem-solving • action research to be continued by initiating another project
-BEG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • not much faith in the project • not much belief in a change to take place
-DUR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • some doubts while trying out new things in class • more self-confidence because of trying to overcome a problem in class • more enthusiastic when realized the benefits for both herself and her students
-END	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • belief in benefits of action research • more confidence in teaching
KNO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more knowledge of writing in general • more knowledge in argumentative writing • basis for practice formed by reading books on writing • knowledge of action research
SKI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a new experience of questionnaire preparation • conducting role-play activities in classroom • application of some knowledge from DOTE course • choosing more interesting topics for writing • making lessons more motivating and enjoyable for students • making lessons more student-centered • giving students more opportunity to say out their ideas • helping students feel more confident in writing
AWA -TFE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • careful thinking process required in observing students' improvement • should be less teacher-dominated • should have less teacher talking time
-STI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better organization in writing • use of pre-writing techniques on their own • no more feelings of failure or misery • higher motivation • enjoy writing more • more positive attitude towards writing

Note: ARA= Action Research Attitude, -GEN= General, -BEG= Beginning of the Project, -DUR= During the Project, -END= End of the Project, KNO= Knowledge, SKI= Skill, AWA= Awareness, -TFE= TAR's Feelings, -STI= Students' Improvement.

The responses that TAR gave under the ARA (Action Research Attitude) category show how TAR developed a positive attitude towards action research during the course of the project. For example, despite the fact that she did not think action research might be useful for her at the beginning, she admitted that she benefited a lot from the project at the end. It is also notable that TAR was willing to initiate a new action research project at the DBE, METU. She also mentioned what knowledge she accumulated and what teaching skills she developed. For instance, she gained more knowledge in pre-writing activities and conducted role-playing as a pre-writing activity in her class for the first time. As for the AWA (Awareness) category, she pointed out her awareness in terms of her own feelings and from her students' side. For example, she realized that she gained self-confidence in teaching writing and that her students were more motivated and developed a positive attitude towards pre-writing activities employed in class during the action research project.

Quantitative Data Analysis

As mentioned earlier, this part of the research emerged during the course of the action research project since TAR wished to observe her students' achievement and attitude in writing.

Comparison of Two Sets of TAR's Students' Essays

After the action research project was over, TAR wanted to investigate whether her students had improved in writing or not. ARI and TAR decided to compare the last writing which the students did at the end of the project with one

of the first writings they did before TAR started the action research project. These writings were scored by ARI and TAR according to a 5-scale criteria for assessing argumentative writing taken from British Council by Hughes (1989) adapted by Annous (1997) (see Appendix F). Then, the means of the scores were taken.

In order to compare the means of the first and the last writings, a t-test analysis was used. The result of the t-test is displayed below in Table 12.

Table 12

T-test Result of Two Sets of Students' Essays

Students' Essays	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
1st essays	17	3.1176	.9275	2.73	32	.005
Last essays	17	3.9411	.8269			

Note: Maximum possible score= 5

For a one-tailed hypothesis, suggesting that the scores of the students' last essays will be higher than those of the first essays, significance was reached at the level of .005. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of TAR's students' first and last essays. In other words, TAR's students wrote considerably better in their last essays than in the essays that they wrote before the action research project.

Questionnaire (Lickert-scale)

The questionnaire (see Appendix E) was prepared after the six cycles of action research were completed and was administered on the last week of the semester. TAR wanted to investigate whether her students had a positive attitude towards the pre-writing activities, which are namely mind-mapping, outlining and

role-playing, done in class during the action research project. ARI and TAR prepared the questions together in a Lickert-scale format, with a 5 point scale (5= Strongly Agree, 4= Agree, 3= Uncertain, 2= Disagree, 1= Strongly Disagree). There are 10 statements in the questionnaire, four of which are about pre-writing activities in general, two about mind-mapping, two about outlining and two about role-playing.

The questionnaire could not be piloted because the statements were specific to TAR's students only. However, three ELT teachers checked the format, the instructions and the statements in terms of comprehensibility and accuracy. The results of the questionnaire were calculated by taking the percentage of the frequency of responses at each scale point for each statement. In addition, the means of each answer were calculated to provide an overall idea of how strongly the students agreed with the statements in the questionnaire. The statements and the results are exhibited in Table 13.

Table 13

Questionnaire Results

Statements	1	2	3	4	5	<u>M</u>
1. I think preparation is necessary before starting to write.	0%	5%	5%	50%	40%	4.25
2. I find it easier to write an essay after participating in pre-writing activities.	0%	5%	15%	60%	20%	3.95
3. I find it easier to write an essay after participating in pre-writing activities.	5%	0%	10%	55%	30%	4.05
4. I feel my writing has improved with the use of pre-writing activities.	10%	10%	20%	40%	20%	3.5
5. Mind-mapping helped me to gather ideas on the writing topics.	5%	10%	10%	65%	10%	3.65
6. I enjoyed the role-play activities.	5%	10%	25%	25%	35%	3.75
7. I find the outlining technique effective in building up the skeleton of my essay.	0%	5%	15%	55%	25%	4
8. I believe that in the future, the outlining technique will help me organize my ideas before I start to write.	5%	10%	10%	50%	25%	3.8
9. The questions during the role-play activities helped me become aware of the different viewpoints on a certain topic before I start to write.	0%	0%	20%	60%	20%	4
10. I am planning to use the mind-mapping technique in my further studies.	10%	5%	25%	45%	15%	3.5

Note: 1= Strongly Disagree; 2= Disagree; 3= Uncertain; 4= Agree; 5= Strongly Agree; M= mean

The first four statements represent an overall positive attitude towards pre-writing activities in general. The results indicate that the students agree with these statements since the majority of the twenty students who took the questionnaire selected 4 (Agree) for these general pre-writing statements. As for the specific pre-writing activities namely mind-mapping, outlining and role-play, the majority of the class population agreed that they are useful for improving their writing. For outlining, for instance, the mean in statement 7 is 4 and that in statement 8 is 3.8. These results indicate that TAR's students have a positive attitude towards the pre-writing activities which were employed in class during the action research project.

The questionnaire also consisted of an open-ended section that asked the students to write any additional comments they might have. Five students out of 20 answered this part. In order to analyze the results of the open-ended part, the responses are categorized in terms of positive and negative attitudes as shown in Table 14.

Table 14

The Analysis of the Open-ended Responses

Attitudes of TAR's students towards pre-writing activities.	
positive	negative
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • learned how to write very well • enough writing done in class 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more detailed and interesting subjects needed • technical subjects needed • waste of time

Only one fourth of the students replied to this part. Therefore, the analysis of the open-ended responses may not indicate a general profile of the class. The

results of the ten-Lickert-scale statements; however, show that the students in TAR's class have a positive attitude towards the pre-writing activities which were employed during the action research project.

Conclusion

In this study, mainly qualitative data were collected through action research meetings with TAR and ARI, TAR's journal entries, and interviews carried out during and after the action research project. After being transcribed and written-up, the data were analyzed first by data reduction; then, the action research meetings were analyzed by event-listing (Cohen & Manion, 1994). The journal entries and the interviews were analyzed through coding by content. That is, the data were grouped under meaningful categories related to the principle research questions. All of these data analyses were directed at an investigation of whether an action research project can be established at DBE, METU, what attitude towards action research a teacher who participated in an action research project might have and finally whether participating in an action research project can enhance an ELT teacher's self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice.

Students' improvement was also observed through quantitative data obtained on inquiry by TAR. TAR and ARI compared the scores of two student essays by using a t-test analysis and administered a questionnaire to measure students' attitudes towards writing.

In Chapter 5, the results of the data analysis will be discussed in detail in regard to the research questions of the study.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

Overview of the study

This descriptive case study investigated whether action research helps an ELT teacher to enhance self-development in terms of acquiring knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice. The researcher (Action Research Initiator: ARI) initiated an action research project with an ELT teacher (Teacher as Action Researcher: TAR) at Middle East Technical University (METU), the Department of Basic English (DBE). TAR implemented the stages of action research, which are plan, act, observe and reflect (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) with the guidance of ARI. TAR and ARI held meetings regularly during a period of three months. The cycle of action research was repeated six times during the project. TAR chose teaching of writing as an area to focus on. She identified the problem as poor organization in her students' essays. After the problem identification, plans were made, actions were taken in class and observed, and finally at the end of each cycle, reflection was done. If necessary, the plan was reformulated and the cycle of action research was repeated.

Qualitative data were collected through the transcripts of the meetings, TAR's journal entries and interviews with TAR and analyzed through coding according to pre-determined categories that refer to the research questions. In addition, an interest in quantitative data collection arose as the research evolved. A questionnaire was given to TAR's students to measure their attitudes towards pre-writing activities which were employed during the action research project. One set of students' essays written before the project and one at the end of the

project were quantitatively compared to investigate whether TAR's students improved in writing.

General Results

General results of the study and conclusions will be presented under each research question mentioned in Chapter 1.

The first research question asked whether an action research project could be implemented at DBE, METU. The summary table of action research meetings in Chapter 4 indicates that the action research cycle, which includes four stages of action research, was repeated six times over a period of approximately three months. The repetition of these cycles is vital as far as action research is concerned. In addition to the four stages which are planning, acting, observing and reflecting (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988), action research steps within the stages such as problem statement and background reading took place. This result shows that an action research project can be implemented in the DBE, METU work environment.

The second research question investigated TAR's attitude towards action research. The results displayed in the Action Research Attitude (ARA) categories in the analysis of journal entries and the final interview indicate that TAR's final attitude was positive towards action research. At the beginning of the project, she reported in her journal entry number 1 (JE 1) that she liked the idea of being involved in such a project. Yet, in the final interview, she revealed that she did not have much faith in the project at the beginning because she was confused about it. As the project continued, she still had some doubts about what the project was

aiming at. In JE 11, for example, she stated that she had not made much progress. Towards the end of the project, she believed in action research and reported that the project enabled her to raise the quality of her teaching and suggested to her how to solve a teaching problem rather than feeling guilty about it. She stated that she solved her problem by employing various new activities and thus gained self-confidence in teaching. At the end of the project, TAR developed a positive attitude towards action research.

The third research question investigated whether TAR experienced self-development in accumulating *knowledge* of language teaching/learning as a result of the action research project. According to the results of the data analysis of the meetings, the journal entries and the interviews, it can be stated that TAR raised her level of knowledge in teaching writing. Through background reading of resource books on writing, TAR seems to have learned more about free writing, controlled writing and argumentative writing. She developed background knowledge about significant concepts in writing such as those concerning the pre-writing stage and organization of ideas. TAR also reported that she accumulated knowledge on how an action research cycle works and that she became knowledgeable in carrying out an action research project. Besides, she stated she heard what a T-test was for the first time and that she learned several basic characteristics of writing a questionnaire such as asking only one thing in each question. Thus, it can be stated that knowledge development occurred in the teaching of writing and in the area of research which includes both knowledge of action research and formal research.

The fourth research question asked whether the action research project contributed to TAR's self-development in improving her teaching skills. All the quotations taken directly from TAR's journal that fit under the *Skill* (SKI) category indicated that TAR experienced development in teaching skills in teaching writing and doing research. For example, she seemed encouraged to use a technique in writing, that is role-playing, which she had not used before because of her lack of self-confidence. Other techniques she used in class were outlining, brainstorming, elicitation, discussion and mind-mapping. She facilitated her students' learning and increased their motivation by using interesting writing topics that her students would enjoy. Besides, she gained more ability to evaluate her students' achievement in writing by learning to use a 5-point scale criteria developed to assess argumentative essays. She also learned a formal method for evaluating and comparing her students' essays using a T-test analysis. Besides, she experienced preparing and administering a questionnaire in her class for the first time. This indicated self-development in another type of skill, which is research skills, that she acquired as a result of the action research project. The analysis of the pre- and post-action interviews suggested that TAR became more capable of preparing lesson plans. The result of the final interview analysis indicated that she was able to make her lessons more student-centered and that she could help her students gain more self-confidence in writing. It can, then be concluded that TAR experienced self-development in her teaching skills as a result of the action research project.

A sub-research question sought to answer whether participation in the action research project encouraged TAR to observe more closely her students'

improvement. TAR's wish to prepare and administer a questionnaire and compare her students' essays at the beginning and end of the project indicated that she was enthusiastic about observing her students' improvement more closely than previously since this was the first time she had used such research tools in class. The results of the questionnaire showed that her students had a positive attitude towards the pre-writing activities employed in class during the project. As a result of the comparison of her students' first and last essays, TAR discovered that her students significantly improved in writing. These findings can be interpreted as important final outcomes of the action research project. As a result of TAR's self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness of teaching practice, students performed better in writing and had better attitudes towards writing than at the outset of the project.

It is generally assumed that students will naturally do better at the end of the semester. In this case, the end of the action research project was also the end of the semester. One may question the students' improvement being due to the action research project. However, the evidence taken from TAR's journal entry 19 (see Appendix B) and the transcript of meeting 12 suggests that in other classes at this time of the semester the students had stopped writing long before and the teachers felt helpless in making them write. This may support the result of the T-test in that the students experienced a higher motivation than those in other classrooms, which might have led to their writing improvement as a result of the action research project carried out in the classroom.

The fifth question investigated whether the action research project contributed to the self-development of TAR in enhancing awareness of personal

and professional aspects of teaching/learning situations. In Awareness (AWA) categories of the journal and the final interview analysis, TAR realized many things about herself, her students and her teaching practice. She realized, for instance, that her lessons should be less teacher-dominated. She openly stated both her negative and positive feelings. She began to think even more critically towards the end of the project. For example, she started to reflect on the relationship of writing performance in the native tongue to that in a foreign language. The analysis of the pre- and post-action interviews indicated that the reflections she had, especially after the action and observation stages of the project, enriched her awareness of her teaching practice and made her redefine her philosophy of teaching. For instance, in the first post-action interview when she was asked to express whether her philosophy in teaching had been reflected in the lesson, she could not state anything related to her philosophy. However, in the second post-action interview, when she was asked the same question, she stated that a teacher should not be the authority in class and that therefore, her lessons were mostly student-centered. In addition to enriched awareness, a positive attitude towards action research can be observed in TAR in the sense that the action research project has provided her with a problem-solving approach to her problems even though she had difficulty in identifying her problem at the initial stages. It is also remarkable that participating in action research has given TAR the satisfaction of work efficiency. She stated, for example that she gained confidence in using role-playing which she was not able to use before because of her fear of failure. As a result of the conclusions TAR drew from her own experiences and the critical thinking process that she went through during the project, TAR's awareness of

personal and professional aspects of teaching/learning situations was enhanced as the results of the study indicate.

The last research question investigated whether participation in the action research project could encourage TAR to initiate a new action research project in the future. In the final interview, she stated that she would be willing to start a new project at DBE, METU. Since her attitude was very positive towards action research, she felt ready to work with other colleagues in the department who are interested and have a desire to improve their teaching. It should be noted that it is beyond the scope of this research to find out whether TAR will be able to initiate a new action research project. However, it is notable that she had the motivation to start a chain of development at DBE, METU.

The findings in the light of the research questions can be summarized by stating that an action research project can be implemented in the DBE, METU work environment, an ELT teacher who participated in an action research project can have a positive attitude towards action research and be willing to initiate a new action research project at the DBE, METU. The findings reveal that conducting an action research project in a classroom situation can be an effective means for enhancing an ELT teacher's self-development in accumulating knowledge, improving skills and enhancing awareness of teaching practice. According to the number of sentences and phrases that fit the Awareness (AWA) categories in the analysis of journal entries and interviews, enhanced awareness was the area where TAR benefited the most from the action research project. This finding is in line with Freeman's (1989) view that among the constituents of

teacher training and teacher development, awareness has a unifying role and functions as a trigger for self- development.

Discussion

As the general results suggested, TAR's self-development in knowledge, skills and awareness was enhanced through the action research project she conducted in her class. The results of Özgirin's study (1996) were similar to those of this study in that action research, which was one of the components of a training course in a university in Turkey, helped the trainees "quite a lot" in improving their knowledge and skills and helped "a lot" in improving their awareness of teaching (p. 65).

The findings of this study are also in line with the Thorne and Qiang's study (1996) conducted with three groups of teachers to encourage reflective teaching and classroom research in China, where participants improved in classroom research skills and reported an increased awareness of the teaching and learning process.

As indicated in this study, awareness was the area that enhanced the self-development of TAR the most, which supports the survey results of Bennett's study (1994) indicating action research to be an effective means of promoting reflection to improve teaching practice. It can be claimed that without reflection on teaching experience, enhanced awareness can not take place. The analysis of journal entries indicated that TAR reflected a lot on her teaching practice and thus experienced self-development.

Keeping a journal enabled TAR to reflect on her teaching in the light of the work being done. Schön (1983) suggests changes in professional awareness occur

if awareness is situated in practice, a kind of reflection-in-action. The journal allowed TAR to recall ideas and impressions and reflect on her actions as she went along in the action research stages. Journal entries of TAR comprised the major source of qualitative data. They were written as a result of the input provided by the meetings held by ARI and TAR and consisted of focused observation and reflections.

The action research meetings, on the other hand, formed the basis of the action research project. Despite the demanding experience of transcribing the meetings, the transcripts provided a very useful source of data, especially in determining the actual process of the action research project, that is, what happened during the course of the project and how many cycles of action research were repeated. It can also be concluded from the transcripts and journal entries that TAR acquired *knowledge* during the *planning* stages of the action research project, her teaching *skills* were developed during the *action* stages of the project cycles and her *awareness* was enhanced throughout the project, and in particular, during the *observation* and *reflection* stages of the project.

Both pre- and post-action interviews and the final interview provided the researcher with a closer look at TAR's feelings and attitudes during and after the action research project. In questions 7, 8 and 9 of the final interview (Appendix D) TAR was asked to point out what she thought the role of the researcher (ARI) was during the study. TAR stated that ARI had the role of a guide who showed ways to deal with the problem in an "imposition-free" manner. This encouraged her to try out new things in class. She also mentioned that being in close terms with ARI helped her to express her feelings sincerely and that being friends with

ARI had a positive impact on her. She also pointed out that such a project could be carried out between colleagues who are not friends but that ideally they should be in close relation with each other.

Since collaboration in action research is essential as mentioned in Chapter 2, the researcher supports TAR's opinion that the participants and collaborators of an action research project do not necessarily have to be close friends but they should establish a rapport with each other.

A final discussion point is related to the teacher training and teacher development constituents. As the results suggested, action research proved to be an effective means of contributing to an ELT teacher's self-development in terms of accumulating knowledge, improving skills and enhancing awareness of teaching practice. In this way, knowledge and skills, known as teacher training constituents, and awareness -a teacher development constituent- were integrated in this research study. Since awareness was the area where TAR experienced self-development the most, action research may seem to be more of a teacher development tool; however, the extent to which TAR accumulated knowledge of language teaching and improved her teaching skills can not be neglected. In this sense, action research can be a means of integrating both teacher training and teacher development constituents.

Limitations

The first limitation was that of time, this being a study that lasted only one semester. The researcher, for example, did not have time to observe whether TAR would be able to initiate a new action research project at the DBE, METU.

Another difficulty was related to the transcription of the interviews and the 13 meetings with a duration of 30-40 minutes each. Transcribing was time-consuming and discouraging at times. The third limitation was that of analytical difficulty. The researcher often found it difficult to decide which piece of data should go under which code category since the data were overlapping at times. This realization is in keeping with linguistic research on language functions which suggests that most instances of language use are not focused on a single function but are multifunctional (Halliday, 1973).

Since this research was a case study, the findings may be interpreted as idiosyncratic. In other words, the findings may be considered to be specific and unique only to this research context, which is DBE, METU.

Implications For Further Research

A follow-up study might examine the data collected in this research study from a different point of view, using linguistic discourse analysis as proposed by Freeman (1996). This type of analysis is a “reading between the lines” kind of analysis to see if *how* something is said supports *what* is said.

Such an action research project can be conducted for a longer period of time. Besides, there might be collaboration with different parties such as researchers and administrators.

Formal research techniques and quantitative analysis are often avoided by classroom teachers. It would be interesting to see if having had a limited, practical and interest-based exposure to such research techniques, classroom teachers

would be more positive about formal quantitative research techniques and their use in operating classes.

Institutional Implications

Cohen and Manion (1990) argue that action research deals with the identification and solution of problems in a specific context and that it aims at improving practice within the educational context where the research is being conducted. In the light of this view, solving a specific problem in a classroom through action research can improve the quality of teaching in the educational context. The experience gained from the action research project in a classroom at DBE, METU can be extended by a *chain of development* where action research participants initiate new action research projects with interested colleagues at the DBE, METU thus leading to better teaching quality overall.

It is essential to point out that this study may represent a model for other institutions or contexts and that the result of this study may shed light on many other English teaching situations in Turkey. Teacher Education Units of English teaching institutions can benefit from the study. They can include action research projects as a component in their teacher training courses or teacher development programs. The study can encourage teachers in other institutions to conduct action research projects through which they can find solutions to their problems and experience self- development. It may also be useful in the sense that conducting action research, which is classroom-based research, can improve an institution's teaching quality by encouraging the teaching staff to seek collaborative means to improve their knowledge, skills and awareness of successful teaching practice.

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Appendix A

A Sample Transcript of an Action Research Meeting

AR Meeting 3 (March 29, 1997)

ARI: Let's just try to summarize what we did last week.

TAR: Last week, at the last meeting, we defined my problem. We decided to collect data about argumentative writing.

ARI: It is not the data, I guess, it is just some background knowledge about argumentative writing. You also mentioned that you are going to ask your students to write at home so that you will spend more time in class having them get ready for writing.

TAR: Yeah!

ARI: We set the journal collection due dates. Next week will be the first due date. As you told me you have some books with you, I guess, about writing and I have also brought some. What I brought is, first of all, this photocopy, the literature review of a friend of mine. He is also doing his masters at Bilkent. He is a Lebanese student and interested in teaching argumentative writing.

TAR: That's interesting.

ARI: He is going to use role plays in one group and have them write an argumentative essay. In another group, he will not use any activities like that and ask them to write argumentative essays, too and he will compare the results.

TAR: They will see the effect of drama in their writing.

ARI: We can, maybe, make use of this.

TAR: Yeah!

ARI: (Goes over the headings in the literature review) So I have these photocopies for you. Let me show you the other books. One from Bilkent Library.

Rhetoric of Argument. He told me that there are exercises on argumentative writing and some background knowledge (looks at the table of contents) What's argument? What do we not argue about? The indispensable reputation!

Accommodation, The Categorical...etc. and there are some exercises. And this is a book that I had at home, A resource book for teachers. And there are various activities according to the students' level. That one is like a handbook, 100 ways of improving writing. Let's look at these and try to have some background knowledge about writing and argumentation. I guess these would be enough.

TAR: I think so! What I have found ,well, do not suit our purpose I guess but....

ARI: You said there is argumentative writing in one of the books.

TAR: Here, not argumentative but Techniques in teaching writing. The subtitles of Chapter 9 is "Techniques in organization, How to help students to start, How to prepare students for writing, Brainstorming, Discussions". And it also gives models making use of the texts which are analyzed in terms of layout, organization.

ARI: Now let's try to think what we are looking for in these books.

TAR: You know, after some basic background knowledge about writing, I expect some practical suggestions on how to help students to get ready for writing.

ARI: So that's the pre-writing stage?

TAR: Hopefully what we do in the classroom will be enough for them to get ideas, because most of them object to writing in class, you know, in a limited time. They said they could write at home better.

ARI: So for while-writing, nothing to do unless they ask questions. How about post-writing?

TAR: Give the students feedback. I mean teacher feedback on grammar, the organization, the use of language.

ARI: Are we interested in how we judge students' essays? Do we need some sort of guidelines?

TAR: Yes, of course.

ARI: Maybe, we can also look for guidelines for evaluation.

TAR: Yeah! Assessing the writings.

ARI: So basically practical suggestions for giving feedback and guidelines for assessing writings. Would you like to employ the activities that you have in the book or some extra activities? I mean, are we also looking for different kinds of activities, what do you think?

TAR: Well, I guess, I try to change the activities in the book a bit , to suit their needs or to make the activities more interesting. I mean I want to change some of them.

ARI: Maybe we can start with an extra activity and then make students transfer the knowledge and skills to the one in the book.

TAR: I guess, it's not a good idea to stick to the topics, writing topics in the book. So I guess it will be better to employ some more activities to improve their writing.

ARI: Any topics you have in mind, different than the book.?

TAR: As I told you before, each unit has one topic, all through the unit, there is only one topic. So at the end of each unit, the students are expected to write an

essay about the same topic. So maybe I should include some other things before they write the one in the book.

ARI: Is it going to be a paragraph or an essay?

TAR: Essay in the first two units, they wrote an argumentative essay. They complained about the subjects in the midterm because it was not argumentative. They were just asked to write their opinions about one topic. It was not very different than what they studied but they were a bit confused.

ARI: When was the midterm?

TAR: Last Monday. So before the midterm they only wrote three essays and they did not get much help from me, unfortunately.

ARI: Maybe they will do from now on.

TAR: Hopefully.

ARI: So, are you doing one writing a week?

TAR: Yes! They allocated 9 hours for each unit. So sometimes one unit finishes in one and a half weeks.

ARI: When is the other midterm?

TAR: 16th or 17th April, just before the Bayram.

ARI: So 3-4 more weeks. That will be the second midterm.

TAR: Mm! So they will have written two more essays and it is not enough. So I am thinking of giving them some more practice in writing.

ARI: You have the writing activity in the book, it is two. Can we add one more?

TAR: Of course, I can even add two. I might even change the topic, you know because the last unit was really boring for them and the text was long, really

difficult for them, as well. So I can adopt the writing topic, I guess if I can find something similar.

ARI: So what do you want to do, now? Shall we just search the books? Anything else you would like to do?

TAR: No! I mean first, I feel I need some information about writing.

ARI: In general?

TAR: Mm, and decide what to do.

ARI: How are the grades of the students? Did you have a chance to look at the midterm?

TAR: No, not yet.

ARI: Maybe we can compare the grades of the first midterm and the other ones.

TAR: You mean the writing grades?

ARI: Yes, are you going to keep a record of them?

TAR: Yes, of course. In fact, I will read the papers tonight.

So they will get motivated for the role-play and things like that but I think it is up to me.

ARI: We are just talking about role-playing as a pre-writing activity which will lead to argumentative writing. You said you already had it in the book. Do you think it is a good idea for me to have a copy of the book? Photocopy?

TAR: Well some pages! We are in Unit 3 now.

ARI: What do you think of the literature review?

TAR: That is quite informative. It talks about the different forms of argumentative essay and how role playing can be used in writing argumentative essays.

ARI: And he also mentions Aristotle. Students may be motivated when they hear about him.

TAR: Maybe!

ARI: Deductive and inductive type, how essay is structured. So these structures can also help them in writing. How does the book deal with it?

TAR: It just gives the topic and says you now write one introductory paragraph stating your thesis, stating the problem, write 3 paragraphs in the body to support your thesis and the concluding paragraphs. That's it. I mean at least I can help students understand the organization first! How can an argumentative essay be written, what outlines can they follow?

ARI: You can provide them with different types of organizations in a chart form.

TAR: Yes, because they will need guidance.

ARI: Maybe you also need a sample of writing. You can find a sample in a book.

TAR: Maybe we analyze the essay to know the outline, how the idea is supported.

So it is my fault, I feel guilty.

ARI: OK. Never mind! Stop blaming yourself. You are doing something about it now.

TAR: Yeah!

ARI: So just feel comfortable. You'll see the changes in your students' behavior.

It is a nice starting point, too because you feel that the students are helpless, from now on, you can see how the development goes.

TAR: At least, I know that I can do something to help them.

ARI: Argumentative writing is just like discussion and can create a lively atmosphere in the classroom. If the students are really ready to argue for, the

topics should be really appealing to them, controversial topics which they will like to argue about, according to their age and interests. Maybe you can ask them what topics they like to argue for or against.

TAR: Yeah! Mm!

ARI: OK! Let's go on having a look at the books. (tape turns off) We spent some time looking at the books and selecting the useful ones.

TAR: Yes, we have some idea about what to do in the classroom. Well, we came up with the idea of motivating the students.

ARI: At least to warm up the students.

TAR: First giving them the kind of information on how to write an essay, principles of writing. I hope it works. So I am thinking of giving them a kind of introduction through certain activities.

ARI: And we learned that free-writing is completely different.

TAR: Oh yes. Argumentative writing is not free writing. But free writing is in pre-writing section.

ARI: What do you think about the literature review?

TAR: This works nice as well! From this book, I can get some background knowledge about argumentative writing both for myself and I can make use of it while preparing something for my students.

And this book will help me adapt some certain sections in the book and integrating role playing, speaking section in writing and I can use it as a pre-writing activity, as well.

ARI: Do you think argumentative writing as in the way it is presented in this literature review like argumentative writing derives from philosophers such as Aristotle. Do you think of mentioning that?

TAR: I don't know, yet. I couldn't decide. I should look through it once more and decide what to do. As I told you before, our program is not tight. I am planing to do something this week because I already have two and a half weeks before the second midterm so I'd better do something before it.

ARI: Can we just talk on the phone on Tuesday or Wednesday before our meeting? Before you do something in the classroom?

TAR: OK! About the procedure, to inform you about what I am planning to do in the class.

ARI: Yeah. Maybe you know you can also decide to do something different after you read these books, for instance. However you wish.

TAR: OK!

ARI: Let's talk on Wednesday. Maybe you can try an activity in class this week.

TAR: If I can prepare before Wednesday. I will phone you.

ARI: I will have a look at the other book about argumentative writing which my friend suggested.

And what can the agenda for the next week be?

TAR: You mean, in our meeting? Well, we can talk about the outcome of what I have done in the classroom.

ARI: How about this book, Rhetoric of Argument?

TAR: Well, I want to keep this, first of all for myself. Maybe I can get something, use some ideas from it.

ARI: OK! So we can also discuss it next week.

TAR: I will see if I can make use of any of the ideas in the book and how it helps me....

ARI: What is the name of the book you are using in class?

TAR: Raise the Issues. It is a new book, used for the first time. Shall I get the photocopy of it?

ARI: Can I have it in the next meeting? And next week is the journal due date.

That's our 3rd week, so you will have 3 entries but you can write something like what you thought during the meetings, in the classroom, during the break time.

TAR: So I mean, what I understand is to write about anything, not writing only after our meeting.

ARI: Yes!

TAR: OK. It is getting more and more specific, what we are going to do. I like it.

Appendix B

TAR's Journal Entries**Journal Entry 1, Meeting 2 (March 21, 1997)**

Dear Diary,

My sweet friend, ARI asked me to keep an account of my experiences, feelings and thoughts about what we are doing. I like the idea of keeping a journal. I like the whole idea, in fact. I am trying to contribute to ARI's master thesis on "Action Research".

At our first meeting, ARI told me about action research, gave me handouts on the subject and we discussed what we can do about it. I was confused at first because I couldn't decide what problem to choose and concentrate on. But in our second meeting, I came up with the idea and defined the problem in my class: free writing. Because I don't feel confident in this area. I feel lost in classroom and haven't been able to give my students a sound help so the students feel lost as well. At our last meeting, ARI and I discussed what I can do and we decided to collect data on free writing first. At our next meeting, we are going to discuss our findings on this subject.

I really like being involved in this project. Having started to do something about a problem that really disturbs me, I feel better and I believe I can overcome this problem - at least I hope so. I feel I am doing something more than just sitting and worrying about a problem. I hope I can achieve something positive in the end.

Journal Entry 2, (March 25, 1997)

Today, I asked my students their opinions/feelings about writing lessons. I asked them to write on a piece of paper and collected them. Most of them wrote about not knowing how to write because they are not used to this kind of writing. Some of them wrote about the difficulty of writing in English because it requires a skill. Some of them asked for a model sentence. Some of them said that it was difficult for them to write their essays in class and in groups and they said that they preferred to write their essays at home.

In the light of the feedback I got from my students, I think it is a good idea to use the class hour to guide the students in their preparations for their essays discussing which points should be included and which are irrelevant. Therefore, having thought about the outline of their essays, the students can write their essays at home.

My students also complained about the writing topic they were asked to write in the midterm exam. They said they were expecting to write an argumentative essay like the ones we practiced in class but they were asked to write about something else.

Journal Entry 3, Meeting 3 (March 29, 1997)

In today's session with ARI, we looked at the books on writing for background knowledge. We looked specifically on "argumentative writing" and then the basic rules for writing an essay.

Next week, I'd like to prepare a lesson including the basic rules for writing, a kind of "introduction" to writing. Hopefully, my students will be interested in it.

Journal Entry 4, Meeting 4 (April 4, 1997)

In our session today, ARI and I talked about what I did in the classroom today. ARI is going to come and observe me in the class while we are writing a model argumentative essay. She is observing me on Friday, 11th April and the day before that, we are having an interview at METU.

Today, I did a writing session in my class. A kind of introduction it was and I think it gave my students an idea of the process of writing.

We went through the steps of writing an essay: preparing to write, choosing a topic, deciding on its purpose and audience, gathering the material and ideas through reading, discussion in class, mind maps, brainstorming, list making, planning, organizing the ideas, writing the first draft, revising and writing the final version.

I drew my students' attention to outlining technique while organizing their ideas. They practiced outlining by making the outline for a written text. I emphasized the importance of writing several drafts (revising what they have written) before their final version.

Then we talked about general and supporting statements and I gave them a task sheet containing 12 statements, four of which are the general statements. I asked them to find the support sentences for each general statement and then we talked about the organization of these statements in an essay. It worked very well.

Then, I told my students what our writing lessons will be like in class: I am going to allocate the class hour for the pre-writing activities such as discussions and brainstorming ideas. I'll help my students to gather the material for their writing, to organize their ideas by making the outline of their writing and writing their drafts. Then, they are going to write their essays at home at their own time.

The students agreed to do that. They seemed to be interested, which made me happy. One or two of my students said that they will have the same problem -limited time- in the exam and they won't be able to make the outline of their essay first. I told them outlining is just a technique which will help them organize their ideas and once they get used to doing it, they'll be quick and efficient in it and don't have to spend a lot of time doing it in exam.

The next lesson, my focus will be on argumentative writing. After a quick introduction, I'll get my students to write an argumentative essay. In fact, I'm planning to do it on the blackboard by eliciting ideas from the students. I think this will also satisfy their need for a model passage. Before this one, however, I will choose a topic for the students to practice the process of writing, deciding on the purpose, audience, gathering ideas, selecting the relevant ones that are not related, organizing these ideas and writing the first draft. It doesn't have to be an argumentative essay as the one they were to write was not in the midterm exam.

Now I feel better.

Journal Entry 5, Meeting 5 (April 12, 1997)

Unfortunately, we've had to change our plans for this week because it was hectic this week and I had friends from Cyprus and we were out every night. I slept very little and couldn't prepare anything about writing. Tuesday was a

holiday because of the snow and I fell behind the program. The only thing I could do related to writing was assigning the students to write an essay following the guidelines that we went through in class the previous week. In class we started doing it but a quiz came.

Journal Entry 6 (April 15, 1997)

Yesterday, I did writing in class. We chose a topic together, country life. We brainstormed ideas, words related to country life and I drew a mind map on the board. Then, we did the outlining. We organized the paragraphs and their order in the essay. I was planning to get them to start writing in class but unfortunately a quiz came. Therefore, I assigned them to write their essays at home. I didn't want to restrict them with one topic so I asked them to write on anything they like but I also wanted them to show me their pre-writing process (mind-map and outlining) together with their essays. Most of them did it and I can see they've written better - their ideas were better organized this time. I liked it. Still, some of my students wrote their essays just for the sake of doing their homework and I think they need more practice.

Of course, writing is not a skill to be acquired immediately. I can't expect my students to start writing wonderfully but at least I can see that I can help them for the habit of "preparing for writing" before they actually start writing, which I believe, will help them express their ideas better in an organized way.

Some of my students said that they found mind-maps and outlining very useful. This encouraged me and made me feel I'm on the right track!

Journal Entry 7 (April 23, 1997)

I've just arrived home. I had a nice holiday in my home country. I feel much better now, more energetic.

I looked at the writing questions in the midterm exam. Again it was writing about general topics, not argumentative. Thank God! If the students have been asked to write argumentative essay, I'd have felt guilty because I haven't employed any tasks on argumentative writing. One of the topics was 'what can be done to have a long and healthy life' which most of the students chose to write about.

Well, I haven't seen my students writing papers yet but when I looked at my students' question papers, I noticed that some of my students took notes, did the outlining and jotted down some of their ideas before writing. I liked it and I hope they have written better organized essays this time. Well, we'll see.

Journal Entry 8, Meeting 6 (April 24, 1997)

Today, I told ARI what I'm planning to do in the next writing lesson. We decided on the date of the interview and the observation. On the 29th April, she's coming to observe me in my class. I'm planning to introduce argumentative writing -a brief introduction- and then get them to practice the pre-writing process for an argumentative essay. I hope it goes well.

Journal Entry 9 (April 28, 1997)

Today I met ARI at school after the classes and we had a short interview. She asked me what my objectives are for the lesson she's going to observe

tomorrow. I couldn't answer her properly because, to be honest, I didn't think of the objectives of the lesson.

My objectives are:

By the end of the lesson, the students will have

- a) become familiar with or rather 'revise' the general characteristics of the argumentative essay.
- b) practiced organizing their thoughts by doing outlining for the argumentative essay.

Tonight, I read my students' essays they wrote in the midterm. To tell the truth, I am disappointed. I admit that the organization of their essays are better now. However, I realize that they are still not good essays. They are full of grammar mistakes and they are so simple and superficial (!). They show no evidence of careful preparation. Then again when I think of the fact that the students have very limited time in the exams, they can't be expected to produce masterpieces! In fact, not having enough time to write an essay in the exams is the subject of common complaint among students as they are exam-oriented.

Journal Entry 10 (April 29,1997)

ARI observed me in my class today. I presented the class the basic rules of an argumentative essay. I tried to elicit these from my students. This topic was not new for them.

We chose one topic. I got my students to suggest support ideas for the topic. We wrote them on the blackboard. Then I asked them to do the outlining. In the next lesson, when the students finished their outlines, I checked some of

them and we wrote one on the blackboard. I gave the writing as homework and am going to look at them with ARI in our next session together.

All in all, I don't think it was a good lesson. It could have been better. ARI and I are going to talk about it as well in the next session. I wonder what she is thinking.

Journal Entry 11 (May 6, 1997)

When I think over the lesson that ARI observed, I can say that it wasn't an effective one. I tried to give my students a brief outlook on an argumentative writing but there was nothing new for my students. We just revised the characteristics of this type of essay writing. When I gave my students the topic, 'Exams should be abolished', the students expressed their ideas but I feel I did most of the task myself. I kind of imposed my ideas and the outline that I prepared beforehand. Well, maybe it was not at all wrong as this was supposed to be the model essay. When the students prepared their own outlines, most of which were almost the same, as they used the ideas we brainstormed, I wrote the outline that prepared on the blackboard. The students were to write their essays at home.

Tomorrow, ARI and I are going to go over their essays and see how well they have written them. I still feel they haven't made much progress other than their improvement in organizing their thoughts. However, writing is not only a good organization. My students also need to improve their vocabulary, grammar, choice of words and style. This is such a broad issue I am a bit discouraged and I realize it needs much more effort and a well-prepared and well-organized teaching strategy!

Journal Entry 12, Meeting 7 (May 7, 1997)

ARI and I had our 7th meeting today. Today we talked about the lesson ARI observed last week. We went over the lesson step by step and as I wrote before, it could have been better. It was a long meeting this time because we also went through the “Action Research Cycle”. ARI got me to read a detailed explanation for each step/phase in the cycle. I felt it could have been better/more enlightening for me if I had read it earlier as it states clearly what each step involves. Now that we’ve finished the first cycle, i.e. we’ve been through planning, acting, observing, and reflecting -that’s what we did at today’s meeting- we will start the second cycle. For the first step of the second cycle, planning, ARI and I are going to design/plan a role play activity as a pre-writing activity. Or we’re going to adapt one of ARI’s friends’ activity which he designed himself for his thesis. But before that, as the mid-term exam is near, I want to give my students another task similar to the one I did last week. I don’t think I’ll be able to employ any more writing activities/tasks next week as there is Spring Festival, which the students are looking forward to and as it is the week before the mid-term.

At this meeting, I’ve come to realize that a change is not necessarily expected to take place in the students or in the problem I’ve chosen, but it could also take place in me, as teacher. When I consider my experience in this aspect, I can say that I have gained an awareness in a particular language skill, in this case, writing and I feel that with a more systematic way, I can guide my students through this difficult skill and prevent them from feeling lost.

ARI mentioned her friend’s using role-plays as pre-writing activity and I’d like to try it in my class as well to see to what extent it will affect their writings

and help the students to write better. I'm curious. I think the subject matter, topic should be interesting for all the students so that they can eagerly participate in the role-play. Well, we'll see.

Journal Entry 13, Meeting 8 (May 9, 1997)

This was our eighth session. I told ARI about the activity that I employed in class today. It was the same kind of activity as the one I did when ARI observed me. What I liked today was that my students came up with almost all the ideas I expected them to. (In fact, I had a task sheet-the writing section of a mid-term- in which all the points were given to the students in note form plus the students were expected to use these in an organized way and write an essay. After the brainstorming through elicitation and discussion, I asked the students to draw the outline of their essays and after we discussed their outlines and write one on blackboard together as a model, I told the students to write their essays at home, where they prefer writing their essays. The lesson was O.K. However, this time my students found it difficult to organize the points because they were expected to refute an idea, in which they need to start with "con", rather than "pro". In the previous activity we directly started with "pro", so it was new to them. But unfortunately, as I didn't draw their attention to this kind of argument, they got confused. I think it could have been better to talk about several possible outlines/organizations for argumentative essays in the first lesson -introduction to argumentative essays.

Next week, ARI is going to bring Samer's role-play activities and we will plan a lesson for our second cycle in the action research.

Journal Entry 14 (May 17, 1997)

Today I compared my students' last two essays to see if they have improved their writing. They were almost the same - no big difference. Then I looked back my students first essays -the ones they wrote at the beginning of the semester- hoping that I could see a dramatic change in their writings. I was disappointed. My good students wrote better essays than the poor ones. Then, I realized that writing is a skill which is directly related to the person's mother tongue. If a student can write well in his or her own language, he or she will naturally write better in another language than those who are not good at writing. Still, there is something which implies that my efforts have been beneficial to some of my students if not to all: Their organizations are better! This is a great relief. Well, maybe it's wrong to say that there has been no change - this is true for good students. I have some students whose essays were disappointing on my part, especially Merih and Erinç, who can write better now. At least they can organize their ideas in a better way now. However, I have one or two students, who are, I believe, hopeless. There's something wrong in their way of thinking. I should be ashamed to say such things for my students but I don't think I can be helpful to those ones.

The students will have their 3rd mid-term on 27th May, '97. I'm really curious now. I hope they will be able to write at least well-organized essays. We'll see.

Next session with ARI, I'm going to adapt a role play activity for my class. I think it will be nice for the students to have a change and for me to see how it will affect their essays. It's been a long time since I last employed a role play

activity in class. Although I feel a bit uneasy about it, I think it will be nice to try a new thing in class plus to break the monotony of the classroom atmosphere.

Journal Entry 15 (May 21, 1997)

I've just finished the lesson plan for the role-play activity that I'm going to do in class tomorrow. It seems O.K. on the paper but I feel a bit uneasy as I haven't done such activities with these students before. I'm not sure if they will be willing to participate in the activity or not. I hope they'll enjoy it. I think the topic is interesting and as they are constantly worrying about their absenteeism, I expect most of them to choose role-play characters who are against taking attendance. It'll be interesting to see them argue for taking attendance from the point of view of another person. Anyway, we'll see what happens tomorrow. I hope it goes all right.

Journal Entry 16, Meeting 10 (May 22, 1997)

ARI and I had a long session today. We first had an interview -a post-observation interview I'd say- and then we went over the role-play activity I employed in class today.

The activity went very well. I think all the students were involved in it as the topic interested them "Should taking attendance be lifted/abolished or not?". This was the first time I was employing a role-play activity after a long time just because of my fears. I always hesitated to employ such an activity thinking that my students would not like it. What a shame! They could do it very well and I realized that they enjoyed it as well. This made me happy and built up my confidence. My students expressed their opinions through the activity and I wonder how well they are going to write their essays on the topic. I'm curious!

Journal Entry 17 (May 27, 1997)

I've marked my students' essays according to Samer's marking scale. I gave most of my students 4. Some of them got 5 and some got 3. In general, there is an improvement in my students' organizing their essays. I like it very much. I feel that I've accomplished something. My students got the idea of "organization" and "argumentative essay". Together with their essays, I also wanted them to hand in the outlines for their essays. My insisting on their making outline before writing their essays has had a positive effect, I think. My best/bright students could still write good essays but I'm sure they have learnt something as well as the others (I hope so). Now I wonder what my students think about their own writing - whether they can see improvement in their writings or not. We'll be able to get an idea about this when we give them a questionnaire in the last week of the semester.

Journal Entry 18, Meeting 11 (May 30, 1997)

Today, ARI came with Samer. I'm going to mark Samer's students' papers as well. Samer is writing his thesis on the effect of role-play activities in argumentative writing.- students like that. I made use of many of his ideas in class. I used his idea of using role-play activities as pre-writing activity and I used his marking scale, which I found very useful.

Today, I worked on the questionnaire with ARI. With this questionnaire, I will be able to get my students' insights about the pre-writing activities (mind-mapping, making outline, discussions, role-play activities) we did in class. I hope they've found it useful and they think positive about all these things. This will encourage me and I'll feel that I've achieved something. I already feel I've

achieved something though. I can see my students' writings have improved to a certain extent and I have an idea now about how to go about writing lessons. I know that I have great responsibility in my students' attitude towards writing: If they have left unassisted, they feel lost and don't know what and how to write. However, if they are guided and helped to gather ideas through brain storming, discussions, role-plays, they stop seeing writing as a nightmare and something to avoid.

Still I'm not so sure about my students' attitude towards writing because sometimes I can see that they're reluctant to write. I think this is not to do with me but with the nature of writing: After all it needs some time to sit down and concentrate on it and sweat! How many teenagers like doing it? I bet not many do.

Journal Entry 19 (June 2, 1997)

Today I employed another role-playing activity in class. The argument was: "Should unhappily married couples with children continue their marriages or get a divorce?" O.K. I admit that it's not a very suitable topic for teenagers. Of course it would have been much more different if me and my colleagues had discussed it. When I introduce the topic to my students, they said the same thing as I predicted: "Teacher, we don't know much about this topic". This was true but I knew that this was partly an excuse for them not to do the activity as they are all reluctant to do anything in class now that it's almost the end of the semester. I could break their resistance by telling them that it would be an interesting experience for them to discuss something they know little about. I also told them that they actually know a lot about the topic from their friends, families and from books and films and they admitted they did. I also encouraged them by saying that

once they adopt a role-play personality, they'll come up with a lot of ideas and start to understand the feelings of those characters.

Then I wrote the role-play characters on the blackboard.

- married unhappy parents (for / against)
- divorced parents (for / against)
- children who live with a single parent (for / against)
- children growing up in an unhappy family (for / against)
- psychiatrists (for / against)

After the students chose their characters, they jotted down their ideas.

After that, the meeting started. I was the chairman again. It went well. The students could come up with lots of ideas with which they exploited the subject from various points of view. Some unhappy parents, for example, were against divorces they didn't have financial independence and as the society would reject them. One of my students, Alkim, the best student in class, role-played a teenager who is for divorce. She started talking about what she went through when her parents were unhappy and still married. She talked about how unhappy she was and how guilty she felt because her mother used to tell her that the only reason for her not getting a divorce was her, etc. She played her role so well that everybody in class, including me, thought it was her true story! I really felt bad about it. In fact, I had thought that there would be some students whose parents got divorced and that it would hurt them to discuss this subject in class. When I asked the girl if it was a true story, I was relieved because it wasn't and I congratulated her on her acting.

Anyway after the activity, I got them to make the outline of their essays and write at home. I really feel excited and curious to see their essays! I really enjoy it 😊.

In our next session, ARI and I are going to finalize the questionnaire to be given to the students. I hope my students are positive about the things we did about writing.

It was unfortunate for the students this semester that they didn't have a proper writing book. In fact, they didn't have proper writing lessons at all! Since they were exposed to guided writing last semester, they were lost when they were asked to write freely on a topic (without being given any cues to elaborate on) I know the situation in other classes from their teachers and they stopped writing essays long before. The teachers said in the meetings that the students didn't want to write and they couldn't get them to write so they gave up insisting. Considering the situation, I feel better as I'm doing something for my students. Though I feel the need to make further studies in how to teach writing now, I know how to deal with writing. I've gained confidence in teaching writing and I could see the change in the atmosphere of writing lessons. I could see that contrary to my assumptions, my students could handle the role-play activities, discussions etc. with a little guidance from me. I could see that even one of my poorest (repeat) students, Melih, started to write well-organized essays.

These are important implications for my teaching writing. If I could achieve these with such a few activities, I could achieve more by applying more activities in a more systematic, organized way, starting right from the beginning of the semester.

In this class, my students wanted to write their essays at home saying that they couldn't concentrate on their writings in class. Next time, I want to try and make my students write in class. I want to try process writing which I never dared employ in class before. Thanks to ARI, with this action research thing, I became aware that once you start dealing with a problem rather than avoid it, you are half way through the solution of the problem. You realize that you are in fact capable of solving the problem. You also feel better as you, at least, try to work out the problem, not just sit and feel guilty about it. ☺

Journal Entry 20, Meeting 12 (June 4, 1997)

ARI and I had our 12th meeting today. I told ARI about my last writing lesson “ Should unhappy married couples with children have a divorce or not?” I also gave her my journal entry in which she could find the details of this lesson.

Then we moved on to finalize the questionnaire we prepared to give my students. While going over the questionnaire, I realized that it was not an easy thing to do. It requires careful thinking. It is important to test only one thing in one question and the wording of the question is also important. Each question must test a different thing and it must serve our purpose i.e. the answer to the question must clearly reveal the students' attitude towards writing. Yes it was a nice experience for me to find out the rules and see the difficulties of preparing a questionnaire.

Journal Entry 21 (June 5, 1997)

Today, I gave my students the questionnaire. I was a bit nervous because I couldn't be sure whether they are positive or not about the things we did in the classroom. Well when I looked through the questionnaire, I saw that in general their attitude was positive, which made me relieved. I'll give the papers to ARI today and later we'll talk about the results together. I'm really curious about the result.

Journal Entry 22 (July 1, 1997)

Today, after a long break we had our 13th session. We first looked at the results of the questionnaire, which shows that the general attitude of the students to general writing activities is positive. The mean is 3.9. This encouraged me to go about the writing lessons in the same way. Now I feel enthusiastic about teaching writing. Now that I've seen I can do something about this once-dreadful teaching point, I'm eager to work more systematically on it right from the beginning of the classes. Once again I've come to realize the importance of "lead-in", "warm-up" and "pre-activities" in teaching and learning a foreign language. And once the students get what they need, and what is necessary for them before they are asked to produce anything in a foreign language, they feel more confident and they are likely to become more successful. I could see it in my students' writings and this really makes me very happy.

ARI and I also read my students' essays and marked these essays by using the scale Samer adapted for his own work. We marked our students' first essays which they wrote before we did anything in class. This was of course at the beginning of the semester where I just asked them to "write" according to the

given topic. We also marked the students' last essays. At first I thought there wasn't a great difference and I was a bit disappointed. The mean of the first writing is 3.11 and the mean of the last one is 3.94. The difference doesn't look very big but ARI and I agreed that students wrote better after these activities.

Journal Entry 23 (July 5, 1997)

ARI said that there is a big difference between the grades of my students' first and the last writing papers. She mentioned T-test, which hopefully I'll learn more about next year while doing MA TEFL course. She said the T-test showed that there is a considerable improvement in my students' writings. I loved the news. 😊

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Pre-action Interview Question

1. What is your objective? What do you plan to achieve in this coming lesson?

Post-action Interview Questions

(taken from Richards & Lockhart, 1994, p. 16)

1. What did you set out to teach?
2. Were you able to accomplish your goals?
3. What teaching materials did you use and how effective were they?
4. What techniques did you use?
5. Was your lesson teacher dominated?
6. What kind of teacher-student interaction occurred?
7. Did anything amusing or unusual happen?
8. Did you do anything differently than usual?
9. Did you depart from your lesson plan? If so why? Did the change make things better or worse?
10. What was the main accomplishment of the lesson?
11. Which parts of the lesson do you think were most successful and which parts were least successful?
12. Would you teach the lesson differently if you taught it again?
13. Was your philosophy of teaching reflected in the lesson?
14. Did you discover anything new about your teaching?
15. What changes do you think you should make in your teaching?

16. Finally, can you say that the things you expected to happen before you started the lesson actually did happen?

Final Interview Questions

1. How do you view action research?
2. Which stage(s) of action research (plan, act, observe, reflect) were most useful for you?
3. How did you feel at the beginning, during and at the end of the action research project?
4. Did this action research project provide something new for you in terms of
 - a) knowledge
 - b) skills
 - c) awareness of your teaching practice?
5. Do you think your students benefited from this project?
6. Would things in your classroom be different this semester if you were not involved in such an action research project? If yes, how?
7. What role do you think the action research initiator (ARI) had? Did you learn anything from ARI? Did ARI impose anything on you during the action research project?
8. Would things be different if ARI was not your friend? If yes, how?
9. Do you think such a project can be done between people who are not in close relation with each other but just colleagues?
10. Do you think having 9 years of teaching experience in ELT and holding an RSA DOTE Diploma had an influence on you during the action research project? If yes, how?
11. Can Department of Basic English (DBE) at Middle East Technical University (METU) benefit from such an action research project? If yes, how?
12. Do you think your colleagues may wish to carry out an action research project with an initiator/collaborator? If yes, would you be interested in initiating an action research project with them?

13. Do you think you can initiate such an action research project with interested colleagues at DBE, METU?

14. Do you have any other comments about this action research project?

Appendix D

Transcript of Interviews**Transcript of 1st Pre-action Interview : (April 28, 1997)**

ARI: I just wanted to ask you why you want to do the activity that we planned together? I mean what's the reason behind it?

TAR: Well, first of all I want my students to improve their writing and I hope the exercise or what I'm going to do tomorrow will be helpful to them in writing their essays.

ARI: What kind of help do you expect the activity will provide?

TAR: Well as we talked before, we are going to talk about the basic characteristics of argumentative writing so they will have an idea about argumentative writing and then we're going to write an argumentative essay together.

ARI: So is this from students' point of view or from your point of view?

TAR: You mean my aim?

ARI: I mean can you just distinguish what good you expect the activity would do from both your part, and from the students'?

TAR: Yeah! Well, the students will here be exposed to a kind of model of argumentative essay. And on my side... how can I distinguish them? I'll try to be a model for them.

ARI: Any kind of change that you expect at the end of the activity?

TAR: Better organization.

ARI: Any kind of change in students' attitudes?

TAR: Hopefully they will feel more confident in writing and maybe they won't be, you know, they won't act as if they see a ghost when I ask them to write.

ARI: Will you tell them that I'm going to observe the classroom?

TAR: I'm not planning to but...

ARI: Well, however you wish.

TAR: If it makes a difference?

ARI: I don't know. However you wish. Is it going to be the first time that you're going to have a stranger in their classroom?

TAR: Yes, that classroom. So they might be curious.

ARI: OK! So what was the time we decided?

TAR: The second hour.

ARI: OK! So tomorrow, I hope I'll come on time. Sorry for keeping you waiting today. OK so that's all. We'll see tomorrow. After the action, we can again discuss what you expected and what really did happen.

TAR: Yes and in fact, I should be more realistic because I'm going to do it the first time and I shouldn't expect much from my students after this exercise.

ARI: So OK! So I mean if you feel like that after the exercise, we can also try some more exercise. So we'll see. So of course, we don't expect a very big change after it but at least we're talking beforehand and we'll see the action together and we'll talk after the action so at least the reflection will help us to do better for the second time.

TAR: Ugh ugh yes!

ARI: OK so that's it. Thank you, bye bye.

TAR: Thank you.

Transcript of 1st Post-action Interview (April 7, 1997)

ARI: What did you set out to teach?

TAR: Well, I was planning, you know, I just wanted to give my students a brief outline, a brief outlook of argumentative essay.

ARI: Were you able to accomplish your goals?

TAR: No. I can't say yes.

ARI: What teaching materials did you use and how effective were they?

TAR: You mean blackboard. Is it a teaching material? I didn't give worksheet. So what can I say?

ARI: How effective do you think it was?

TAR: In fact, I don't think it was effective, very effective because what I actually did was just to make the students remember the things because it was not something new to them I realized and well I don't think it was effective.

ARI: What techniques did you use?

TAR: Elicitation, brainstorming. It was not discussion, was it? You remember, we talked about some of the topics if they could be a good topic for an argumentative essay or not. It was not a discussion. Well, that was it I guess.

ARI: Was your lesson teacher dominated?

TAR: Mostly.

ARI: What kind of teacher student interaction occurred?

TAR: Teacher student interaction. What do you mean? Informative kind of interaction or what is it? Teacher to students. I asked the whole class questions and then individually. Yeah! That was it.

ARI: Did anything amusing or unusual happen?

TAR: One of my students. His way of thinking is so different from the others and in every lesson, you know, how can I say? He opposes something. He thinks that we can accept this as well. Maybe this the situation and he just thinks of the extremes and he did the same thing that lesson but I don't remember what he said now but there was something like that.

ARI: Yeah! I think I know him. He was sitting next to me on the right side.

Did you have any problems with the lesson?

TAR: In what way?

ARI: Any problem.

TAR: Problems! Well, my problem was it was not a well-prepared lesson, not well organized maybe. I don't think I monitored it very well.

ARI: Did you do anything differently than usual?

TAR: What do you mean? Something different than my plan or different from your other lessons?

ARI: Different from your usual lessons.

TAR: No, I don't think so.

ARI: Did you depart from your lesson plan? If so, why? Did the change make things better or worse?

TAR: Yeah before presenting them the writing topic, "The examination should be abolished", I was thinking of making them think about another topic, you know, brainstorm ideas about that topic, first and then we could move onto the next one but it didn't work so I gave it up and directly started our main topic, the examinations should be abolished.

ARI: What was the main accomplishment of the lesson?

TAR: I don't know. Main accomplishment. Have I accomplished anything from that lesson? I'm not sure. At least, I've got the students to make an outline and write according to their outline.

ARI: Which parts of the lesson do you think were most successful and which parts were least successful?

TAR: To be honest, I guess the most successful part was the elicitation part because I believe, I think I'm good at eliciting ideas from most of my students. Least successful? It is my overall handling the lesson

ARI: Would you teach the lesson differently if you taught it again?

TAR: Yes, I think so. But I don't know how. Maybe in a more organized way.

ARI: Was your philosophy of teaching reflected in the lesson?

TAR: First of all, I have to think of what my philosophy is... I don't know what my philosophy is. I'll think about it.

ARI: Did you discover anything new about your teaching?

TAR: Yes, I'm a bit discouraged I guess. I could have been more effective. That's what I found out.

ARI: What changes do you think you should make in your teaching?

TAR: Maybe I should let the students participate more. It was mostly teacher centered, not student centered but I guess I just wanted to give them a model. That's the first example so maybe it was the right thing to do. It made me uncomfortable to be so dominating in the classroom so maybe I can make the lessons more student-centered.

ARI: So finally, can you say that the things you expected to happen before you start the lesson actually did happen?

TAR: OK yes but not soundly, it was not a good lesson, I think.

ARI: All right. That's it! Thank you.

Transcript of 2nd Pre-action Interview (May 22, 1997)

ARI: Can you tell me what your objectives are?

TAR: I've written my objectives this time. I'm prepared for that. Well, I wrote them here so I'll read them. I expect my students at the end of the lesson to have brainstormed their ideas for an argumentative essay. We're going to do role-playing, you know, organizing and clarifying their arguments by drawing an outline for argumentative essays before writing.

ARI: If you think of your previous action which was observed, can you tell me there is going to be a kind of difference?

TAR: The activities are different so I expect my students to enjoy it. I am not sure because this is the first time I am trying this kind of an activity. I am a bit nervous. The students might be reluctant to do the role-playing. I'm not sure. I haven't told them anything about it.

ARI: As for the organization, I mean, lesson plan, lesson preparation, how do you feel now?

TAR: Well, I am a bit more prepared this time. I hope it will go better.

ARI: Do you feel comfortable ?

TAR: Well, I think so. I told you I'm a bit nervous just because this is a different kind of activity.

ARI: Do you expect that this activity will teach some things to both you and your students?

TAR: Yes, hopefully. I will not be discouraged to use role play activities in the classroom.

ARI: As for the students?

TAR: They will enjoy hopefully because I told you the topic sentence, the subject matter. It is something they are really interested in and they are involved in. So I hope my students will enjoy it. And without being aware of what they are doing, hopefully they will gather enough ideas which will facilitate their writing. This is a kind of brainstorming activity.

ARI: Is this the first time you are trying a role play activity?

TAR: Yes.

Transcript of 2nd Post-action Interview (May 22, 1997)

ARI: Were you able to accomplish your goals?

TAR: I think so. My goals were getting students ready to write an essay to brainstorm their ideas for an argumentative essay through role play. Organize and clarify their arguments, I am not sure about this because I have not seen their outlines yet.

ARI: What teaching materials did you use and how effective were they?

TAR: I used the blackboard to present the arguments to present role play characters and nothing else. Teaching materials? Grouping is not a teaching material?

ARI: No. What techniques did you use ?

TAR: Grouping. Is it a technique ? Yeah, I don't know.

ARI: Role playing can be a technique.

TAR: Is this a technique? It was just used to help the students form an idea.

ARI: Was your lesson teacher dominated?

TAR: I don't think so this time. I interfered in some ways but I don't think it was teacher-dominated.

ARI: What kind of teacher-student interaction occurred?

TAR: Teacher-student? Well, as you have observed I gave them instructions, I set the scene and I acted as a chairman of the meeting just to organize their activity.

ARI: Did anything amusing or unusual happen?

TAR: No. I could see that my students enjoyed it. Especially towards the end of the discussion and role playing, they were still eager to talk.

ARI: Did you have any problems with the lesson?

TAR: I didn't ask my students to repeat instructions so some of them were a bit confused about what to do. Maybe grouping them could have been much quicker if I had been more organized.

ARI: Did you do anything differently than usual?

TAR: Well, I employed a role play activity.

ARI: Did you depart from your lesson plan? If so, why? And did the change make things better or worse?

TAR: In my lesson plan, I included writing down the main points the students came up with during the meeting, I mean writing them down on the board, just summarizing but I changed my mind because I thought it would be just a repetition and my students would get bored. I thought they had enough

discussion. So instead of outlining, I asked them to start their outlining but I told them I won't consider what they have written as an outline. I just told them that those things that they wrote are just notes for their outlines, kind of their first drafts so that they won't forget what they are going to write in their essays.

ARI: What was the main accomplishment of the lesson?

TAR: This was a new technique and I think my students enjoyed it because all of them actively participated in the discussion. Hopefully, it was more effective than the way I did before. So I think I achieved to get my students to brainstorm their ideas.

ARI: Which part of the lesson do you think were most successful, which parts were least successful?

TAR: Least successful was my handling the activity, I mean trying to get them into groups.

ARI: Would you teach the lesson differently if you taught it again?

TAR: This time I may choose a student to be a chairperson rather than be a chairperson myself. In that case, it would be more student-centered. I could be more organized especially while grouping them.

ARI: Did you discover anything new about your teaching?

TAR: I have always been hesitant to employ role play activities. Now I feel I can do it. And my students liked it.

ARI: Was your philosophy in teaching reflected in the lesson ?

TAR: I hate being the authority in the class but unfortunately I find myself in that position in most of the time just because of the tight program. Actually, I am

for student-centered teaching but I don't do it. But this lesson made me feel better because the students did most of the things themselves.

ARI: Can you say the things that you expected to happen before you started the lesson actually happened?

TAR: Yes.

ARI: So are you satisfied with what you have done.?

TAR: Yes, I am.

Transcript of the Final Interview (July 1, 1997)

ARI: How do you view action research?

TAR: I find action research very useful and effective in improving both teacher and student effectiveness/success in foreign language teaching and learning. With action research, teachers can work out most of the problems about their teaching practices or their students.

ARI: Which stage of action research (plan, act, observe and reflect) was most useful for you?

TAR: Of the stages of action research, I found observation and reflection most useful for myself. When ARI observed me, after the observation stage, when we had the reflection stage, we could talk critically and objectively about what actually happened and what was supposed to happen in the classroom. In other words, I found it useful to be observed by ARI because at the reflection stage, I could see myself and my class more objectively and make necessary changes accordingly for the next cycle.

ARI: How did you feel at the beginning, during and at the end of the action research project?

TAR: At the beginning, I don't think I had much faith in this project. I didn't think it would be of great help for me to change things in me and in my students. But at least there was something different for me to deal with and I was going to experience something I didn't know much about. During the action research project, I started to feel better because I was actually doing something to overcome a certain problem about my teaching. I also had doubts while experimenting new things such as role-playing activities. I was a bit worried about how they would go in the classroom. However, as I continued with them and saw that they had a positive effect on my students, I became more confident and more enthusiastic and I realized I was doing something good both for my students and for myself. At the end of the action research project, especially after seeing the results of the questionnaire, which showed my students' positive attitude towards what we did in class, I was elated. Now I believe in the great benefits of this project and I'm willing to continue to be involved in such a project in the future as well. I gained confidence and I realized that with a little more preparation, I can make my teaching more effective, enjoyable and fruitful.

ARI: Did this action research project provide something new for you in terms of

- a) knowledge
- b) skills
- c) awareness of your teaching practice?

TAR: The action research project provided something new for me in terms of skills. I realized that I can conduct role play activities in the classroom. It's not something that I can never do. In terms of knowledge, the action research project made me feel the need to learn more about writing in general and argumentative writing. I looked at some books and what I learned from those books formed the basis for my practices in the classroom during the project. The action research project also made me aware of my teaching practice. I've realized that I can be less dominant in the classroom because my students are able to do a lot with little help from me in most cases. I think I should reduce teacher talking time as well and try to make the lessons more student-centered.

ARI: Do you think your students benefited from this project?

TAR: I strongly believe that most of my students benefited from this project. Their writing papers got better in terms of organization and they drew mind-maps, outlines before they started writing in the midterms, which shows that they found them useful.

ARI: Would things in your classroom be different this semester if you were not involved in such an action research project? If yes, how?

TAR: Yes, definitely. Things would be different this semester if I wasn't involved in such an action research project. I would feel miserable, guilty and inefficient because I wouldn't know how to go about the problem and I wouldn't have been able to get my students to write better essays. My students would also be feeling lost and they would hate the writing lessons and most probably, they would reject doing any kind of writing like most of the students in other classes.

Therefore, writing lessons if we could have any, would turn out to be torture for both my students and for myself.

ARI: What role do you think the action research initiator (ARI) had? Did you learn anything from ARI? Did ARI impose anything on you during the action research project?

TAR: I think the action research initiator (ARI) had a role of guiding and helping me to find ways or solutions to deal with my problem. She also encouraged me to try new things by suggesting ideas and she helped me gain confidence by making positive comments on what I have done or was doing. I learnt what the action research project was like from ARI. I also found out that preparing a questionnaire isn't an easy job to do and that it requires a careful thinking process. ARI didn't impose anything on me during the action research project. Instead she encouraged me to do some things that I couldn't have decided to do on my own. If she had imposed anything on me, she must have done it in such a subtle way that I didn't feel I was being forced to do things. Otherwise, I'd feel uncomfortable.

ARI: Would things be different if ARI was not your friend? If yes, how?

TAR: I think ARI's being my friend has a positive impact on me. Being friends makes the communication easier and I felt really comfortable with ARI. If she was not my friend, I'd feel tense and nervous and maybe I would not be as open-hearted about my feelings as I could be so I think it's important to be friends with ARI.

ARI: Do you think such a project can be done between people who are not in close relation with each other but just colleagues?

TAR: As I've just mentioned, I think it's the ideal to be in close relation with each other to do such a project. Still, it can be done between colleagues who are not friends. The atmosphere could be more formal and academic then but I don't think it would be as fruitful as the project done between friends. Well, I prefer to enroll in such a project with my close friends.

ARI: Do you think having 9 years of teaching experience in ELT and holding an RSA DOTE Diploma had an influence on you during the action research project? If yes, how?

TAR: Yes definitely. During the action research project, I used my experience in teaching and what I've learned from RSA DOTE course in terms of my students' needs and interest, important elements for the effectiveness of the lessons. I tried to choose topics which might interest my students most. I tried to make the lessons motivating and enjoyable for my students. I tried to make lessons more student-centered by setting up role-plays and giving them the opportunity to come up with their own ideas with little teacher interference and guidance. All in all, I tried to make them enjoy the activities while learning. I tried to help my students to form necessary input before they produced their output so that they would feel more confident in doing their work.

ARI: Can the Department of Basic English (DBE) at Middle East Technical University (METU) benefit from such an action research project? If yes, how?

TAR: DBE at METU can benefit from such an action research project. The action research project can enable the teachers to get together and share their ideas. It can also enable the teachers to become aware of other teachers' problems with their classes and I think this creates a sense of unity among teachers.

ARI: Do you think your colleagues may wish to carry out an action research project with an initiator/collaborator? If yes, would you be interested in initiating an action research project with them?

TAR: I don't think all my colleagues may wish to carry out an action research project with an initiator and collaborator. But I feel any teacher with a sense of responsibility will be eager to get involved in such a project.

ARI: Do you think you can initiate such an action research project with interested colleagues at DBE, METU?

TAR: I think I can initiate a project like that. Why not? I enjoyed it and benefited from it a lot.

ARI: Do you have any other comments about this action research project?

TAR: I believe all teachers should be involved in an action research project and I'm sure that it will raise the quality of their teaching and they'll be able to sort out some of their problems in class.

Appendix E

Questionnaire

Ten statements about pre-writing activities (mind-mapping, outlining, role-play) are given below. Read the statements carefully. Then circle the number that most closely corresponds to your opinion about the statement.

Strongly Agree = 5

Agree = 4

Uncertain = 3

Disagree = 2

Strongly Disagree = 1

- | | | | | | | |
|-----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | I think preparation is necessary before starting to write. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. | I find it easier to write an essay after participating in pre-writing activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. | Pre-writing activities helped me organize my writing in a logical way. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. | I feel my writing has improved with the use of pre-writing activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. | Mind-mapping helped me to gather ideas on the writing topics. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. | I enjoyed the role-play activities. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. | I find outlining effective in building up the skeleton of my essay. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. | I believe that in the future the outlining technique will help me organize my ideas before I start to write. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. | The discussions during the role-play activities helped me become aware of the different viewpoints on a certain topic before I start to write. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. | I am planning to use the mind-mapping technique in my further studies. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Other comments:

Appendix F

A 5-Scale Criteria for Scoring Argumentative Essays

(Adapted from British Council; Hughes, 1989, by Annous, 1997)

5	The writing displays a completely logical organizational structure which enables the message to be followed effortlessly. Relevant arguments and counter arguments are presented in an interesting way, with main ideas prominently and clearly stated, with completely effective supporting materials. Arguments are effectively related to the writer's experience or views.
4	The writing displays good organizational structure which enables the message to be followed without such effort. Arguments and counter arguments are well presented with relevant supporting material and an attempt to relate them to the writer's experience or views.
3	The writing is organized well enough for the message to be followed throughout. Some arguments and counter arguments are presented but it may be difficult for the reader to distinguish main ideas from supporting details. Main ideas may not be supported; their relevance may be dubious; arguments may not be related to the writer's experience or views.
2	The writing lacks a clear organizational structure and the message is difficult to follow. Arguments are inadequately presented and supported; they may be irrelevant; if the writer's experience or views are presented their relevance may be difficult to see.
1	The writing has no perceptible organizational structure and a message can not be followed. A meaning comes through occasionally but it is not relevant.

Appendix G

A Sample Coded Page from TAR's JournalJournal Entry 1, Meeting 2 (March 21, 1997)

Dear Diary,

My sweet friend, ARI asked me to keep an account of my experiences, feelings and thoughts about what we are doing. I like the idea of keeping a journal. I like the whole idea, in fact. I am trying to contribute to ARI's master thesis on "Action Research". ARA

At our first meeting, ARI told me about action research, gave me handouts on the subject and we discussed what we can do about it. I was confused at first because I couldn't decide what problem to choose and concentrate on/ But in our second meeting, I came up with the idea and defined the problem in my class: free writing because I don't feel confident in this area. I feel lost in classroom and haven't been able to give my students a sound help so the students feel lost as well. At our last meeting, ARI and I discussed what I can do and we decided to collect data on free writing first. At our next meeting, we are going to discuss our findings on this subject. AWA-TFE
AWA-SPO

I really like being involved in this project. Having started to do something about a problem that really disturbs me, I feel better and I believe I can overcome this problem - at least I hope so. I feel I am doing something more than just sitting and worrying about a problem. I hope I can achieve something positive in the end. ARA